





NIGHTS AT THE PLAY.

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CHATTO AND WINDUS, PICCADILLY, W.

NIGHTS AT THE PLAY

A VIEW OF THE ENGLISH STAGE

By DUTTON COOK

AUTHOR OF "HOURS WITH THE PLAYERS," "A BOOK OF THE PLAY,"
"ART IN ENGLAND," ETC.



London

CHATTO AND WINDUS, PICCADILLY

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INTRODUCTION.

THE critic is never a very popular person ; still, even the critic has his uses. The critic of the theatre may be viewed as its chronicler, or as the contributor of materials to a future history of the stage. Hazlitt held that "some record" of the actors was "due to the world;" while he noted that "the player's art is one that perishes with him, leaving no trace of itself but in the faint descriptions of the pen or pencil." The lives of the players cannot be related without constant reference to contemporary reviews of their performances.

A playgoer from my infancy—from that early period of life when one does not go to the theatre exactly: one is taken there, to view with childish, wide-open eyes, until sleepiness or weariness comes to half-close them, the achievements of the actors—I had learnt to interest myself in the stage and its professors long before the responsibilities of systematic theatrical criticism developed upon me.

The volume I now submit to the public contains a select number of the theatrical reviews I have contributed during the last fifteen years, now to *The Pall Mall Gazette* and now to *The World* newspaper. I

know not that any apology is necessary for a book of this class. On behalf of his republished dramatic criticisms, which extend over four years only, Hazlitt pleaded that "a work containing a detailed account of the stage in our own times—a period not unfruitful in theatrical genius—might not be wholly without its use." I may be permitted, perhaps, to avail myself of Hazlitt's plea, while protesting against any forced comparison with that eminent writer, which would be unfortunate for myself. It is true that it has not fallen to me to discuss histrionic events of such importance as those which employed the pen of Hazlitt. He dealt with an exceptional period: he had to tell among other matters of the advent of Edmund Kean, of the triumphs of Miss O'Neil, of the final representations of John Kemble and of Mrs. Siddons. Still the transactions of our theatre during the last fifteen years have not been wholly without worth and significance; although I would frankly forewarn the reader that my book can scarcely claim to interest those who are not predisposed to be interested in its subject. Necessarily books about the stage are mainly written for those who concern themselves with histrionic affairs, the drama and its interpreters.

It is as well, however, that the importance of our theatre should be recognised. It may no longer be regarded as the engine of popular instruction it once was—in that respect it has been superseded by books and newspapers, libraries and school-boards; some it may still educate to a certain extent, but, without doubt, its chief mission now is to amuse. And how much of human life is spent in seeking, if not absolutely in

finding amusement! There are probably some 25,000 persons attending the London theatres every night in quest of recreation; and these audiences are for ever changing. The public of Monday is not the public of Tuesday, nor the public of Tuesday the public of Wednesday; and so on. And the successful London plays do not attract merely in London: they are carried to the provinces, to America, to the colonies—wherever the English language is spoken. Surely some interest attaches to this vast far-reaching stage, and to the kind of entertainment it sets before its prodigious host of patrons. The drama is not to be overlooked because it may seem to be of lower literary stature than once it was; it is not totally eclipsed because it has now lost something of its original brightness. As Professor Morley writes in his “Journal of a London Playgoer,” 1866: “The Drama is too natural a part of us to be cast off: it may be an ailing limb of the great body of our literature, but it is a limb and a main limb. Sense of dramatic action appears in the year-old infant, and enlivens every form of child’s play. The maturest acts and busiest cares of life, in proportion as a community is vigorous and has high motives for its energy, quicken the sense that all the world’s a stage. In the chief city of such a community—in London—where every man lives in active daily perception of the characters and humours and relations to each other of the persons about him, if there be any literary life at all, there is dramatic power.”

A critic must be judged by his criticisms. His opinion has to be received *quantum valeat*. On my own behalf, however, I may urge that as a critic I

have not spared painstaking and that I have sought to be candid. It seemed to me when I entered upon my duties as a theatrical reviewer that the criticisms of the time were too often written rather in the interest of managers and actors than to serve or to inform the public. We vaunt the integrity of the British press; nevertheless, a newspaper is a private and commercial speculation, greatly dependent for success upon the support and good-will of the advertisers.

Naturally the newspaper proprietor seeks to conciliate these as much as possible. Among the advertisers figure largely the theatrical managers—expending thousands weekly in publicly announcing and extolling the attractions of their establishments. Is it surprising that the newspaper proprietor is biassed towards the theatrical manager, desirous of furthering his interests, willing that his entertainments shall be indulgently reviewed? Must it not often happen that the critic is lenient, too lenient, because the newspaper proprietor he serves will have him so?

Let me hasten to add that in the exercise of my critical function I have not been hampered or troubled by considerations of this sort. The journals with which it has been my fortune to be connected have owed nothing to the managers—have ignored or remained insensible to the influence they exercise as advertisers. I have always been at liberty to express my opinions unreservedly, and I have so expressed them—with no desire to offend or to injure individuals, but with a conviction that occasionally our stage has needed a more caustic treatment than it has been wont to receive. For it has suffered, I think, from an

excess of soothing applications. Both playwrights and players have been over-indulged in sedatives; they have been lulled into a false sense of their own merits and of the security of their position.

At the same time I would lay no undue stress upon my own judgments. I am fully sensible that I am but one playgoer expressing an individual opinion upon the plays presented in his time, and the players he has seen play. I leave other playgoers to arrive at their own conclusions, and there to abide if they so please. As Christopher North has pronounced, "of all schools of poetry and criticism the most contemptible is the oracular." It is only very youthful writers, immature of years or of wisdom, that are intolerant of all judgments but their own. Sir Oracle was no doubt a very juvenile knight. On this subject Professor Morley cites an Italian proverb: *Tutto il cervello non é in una testa*—"All the brains are not in one head." He would have his readers understand that "a reservation of respect to differing opinions" underlies even those passages of his book which may contain the firmest expression of his own belief. "The strongest individual conviction," he writes, "ought not to be inconsistent with a power of applying to oneself the law that is applicable to all other men. We see every day men whom we think none the less wrong because they are positive; and we ought to admit, each for himself, the difference between a personal conviction and an abstract truth." Hamlet is not the only man who has seen players play that he held very cheaply, albeit he heard others praise them, and that highly. Perhaps it was also his fate to find the performers he

most admired, contemned by others. Plays may be criticised according to established canons and prescriptions; but the merits and demerits of the players can be less decisively pronounced upon. In their regard certain questions must be left open for reference to individual taste, fancy, or predilection. Concerning, for instance, the correspondence of acting with nature—or what upon the stage passes for nature—each spectator must decide for himself; with an understanding that no single opinion as to the resemblance of a portrait can be accepted as universally conclusive.

Finally, the reader should be advised that I have not attempted here a complete chronicle of the theatre during the last fifteen years, but simply records of certain selected events; sufficient, however, as I believe, to afford a fair general view of the existing condition of our stage. Of many plays and players it may be said that they come out only to go in again; that they are still-born, or live only but a little while, and dying make no sign. It may indeed be charged against me that I have reproduced too many reviews resembling graveyard inscriptions: frail memorials of mortality, imperfect registers of the obscure and the forgotten.

Critical notices of the foreign performances which of late years have so often occupied the English stage, I have not thought it expedient to include in the present collection. These have seemed to me in the nature of exotic events remote from the general condition of our stage, and exercising upon it but little real influence.

DUTTON COOK

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NIGHTS AT THE PLAY.

I.

"AS YOU LIKE IT."

[Haymarket Theatre.—September 1867.]

EARLY in the year the sudden announcement that the veritable great-grand-daughter of Mrs. Siddons had adopted the profession of her distinguished ancestress, and was about to appear in a Shakspearian character on the boards of a London theatre, excited considerable interest in play-going circles. Mrs. Scott-Siddons, for so the lady designated herself, in due course came before the public at the Haymarket, played *Rosalind*, and, on the occasion of her benefit, a scene or two from "Romeo and Juliet." Her engagement was but brief, and closed without her essaying any other characters; not so much from absolute want of success attending her exertions, as from the fact that the manager had previously arranged with other players, had decided upon the method of his campaign, and was unable to place his theatre any longer at the disposal of the actress, or to devote any greater portion of his season to what was avowedly an experiment. Mrs. Scott-Siddons has now reappeared at the Haymarket, and has again sustained the part of *Rosalind*, while it is announced that the tragedy of "Romeo and Juliet" will be presently produced in its entirety on her account.

The Kemble school of acting may be said to have found its last exponent in the younger daughter of Charles Kemble. Certainly it would be vain to look for either

its beauties or its blemishes in the histrionic manner of Mrs. Scott-Siddons, who, indeed, from her extreme youth and from other circumstances, can have had scarcely any opportunity of studying those specialities of performance which the elder branches of her family made so famous. The severity of demeanour, the majestic repose, the classicality of attitude, the studied elocution, the stately declamation which distinguished the Kemble school have doubtless departed from the stage for ever; and even could they be brought back again might probably be found, in many respects, as laboriously artificial, as tediously unnatural as certain critics of the past did not shrink from proclaiming them. Mrs. Scott-Siddons is endowed with much of that personal beauty which seems the heritage of the house of Kemble. She is in possession of what is known as "a stage face"—firmly limned and finely proportioned, capable of great variety of expression, with eyes large and lustrous. But her acting is altogether of a modern pattern. Her utterance is rapid, even hurried; her gestures are incessant; she changes her position on the stage with a curious restlessness; and clearly depends rather upon the volatility and vivacity of her general manner than upon investing the character she represents with any special intellectual attributes, or even any marked individuality. Her aim is to please more than to impress. Low of stature, she is compelled to alter the text of her part, and makes *Rosalind* wear doublet and hose, not because she is "more than common *tall*," but because she is "more than common *grave*." The word is badly chosen. Gravity seems to be out of the question altogether.

Mrs. Scott-Siddons's *Rosalind*, therefore, is very much what it was in April last, with the exception, perhaps, that she now plays the part with a little more closeness and care. Confidence was not wanting on the former occasion, but the actress appears to have acquired more ease of manner, and further practice may probably induce her to abandon certain tricks of carriage which occasionally mar the picturesqueness of her presence on the stage. That the performance is satisfactory as it stands at present cannot be said. The part is one that makes demands upon the highest powers of the most consummate actress. To

give effect to its shifting moods and rapid transitions of emotion, one especial natural gift is almost indispensable, and in this respect Mrs. Scott-Siddons is unfortunately deficient. Her voice is weak, limited in compass, and without musical charm. It does not lend itself to pathetic expression. Its thin fatigued tones divest *Rosalind's* utterances of variety, and of those gradations of significance which naturally pertain to them. This defect may not be so manifest in other parts, but in *Rosalind* it cannot escape notice. But this admitted, there is much in Mrs. Scott-Siddons's performance worthy of commendation. She is, as might be expected, invariably ladylike. If not an ideal *Rosalind*, she is yet a prepossessing one. A little too conscious of herself and of her audience, she very rarely over-acts. Coarseness would be clearly impossible to her. She is essentially refined and feminine, while there is a light-hearted, innocent air, sometimes almost infantine in its spontaneity, pervading much of her acting, which should be prized if only for the rareness of its appearance on the stage. What rank the actress may attain in her profession must yet remain to be seen. But it cannot be doubted that some place will be found for her worthy of her acceptance, even if of a less exalted kind than she is at present ambitious of.

II.

"ROMEO AND JULIET."

[Haymarket Theatre.—September 1867.]

WHEN Miss Fanny Kemble came upon the stage in the year 1829, and by her exertions, and the favour with which they were received, for a time retrieved the fallen fortunes of Covent Garden Theatre, *Juliet* was the part selected for her first appearance. Mrs. Scott-Siddons would probably have found it to her advantage if she had followed her relative's example, chosen *Juliet* for her earliest essay also, and deferred her performance of *Rosalind* until a more

advanced period of her dramatic career. Not only does the part of *Juliet* appeal more directly to popular feeling, more surely awaken the applause of the theatre than does the character of *Rosalind*, but it is much more within the means of a young actress, making less demand upon that stage subtlety which can only be acquired by practice, calling into play in a smaller degree that histrionic finesse which consists in suggesting, as compared with fully expressing, sentiment and emotion. *Juliet* may be likened to a work of art broadly painted in primary colours, whereas *Rosalind* is composed of many half shades and delicate gradations of tint, requiring much manipulative skill to bring them into contrast and yet preserve their harmony. *Rosalind* is a complex character, with seriousness underlying her merriment, a warp of earnest intention crossing the woof of playfulness. But *Juliet* is a heroine of simplicity; a young girl suddenly exalted by the fervour and intensity of her first love. And then to the personation of *Juliet* Mrs. Scott-Siddons brings peculiar qualifications. The part can very rarely have been so well *looked*. To a face of noble proportion and expression she adds much graceful lightness of figure and elegance of deportment. Few more picturesque objects have ever been seen on the stage than Mrs. Scott-Siddons's *Juliet* in her pearl-embroidered, cream-coloured satin train of the first act. Moreover, she has all the juvenility of appearance which is so eminently necessary to *Juliet*, whose youth is in great part the explanation and the apology for the impetuosity of her love. Its importance, therefore, should not be over-looked, although it is true that the stage has been accustomed to content itself with maturer representatives of the character. Sarah Siddons, it may be noted, had numbered twenty years beyond the age ascribed to the *Juliet* of Shakspeare when, on the occasion of her benefit in 1789, she first played the part in London.

That Mrs. Scott-Siddons's *Juliet*, received as it was with extraordinary enthusiasm by a crowded theatre, is, at present, a wholly satisfactory performance it would be too much to assert; but that her exertions in the character will lead to a more favourable estimate of her merits as an actress than has hitherto been entertained can hardly be

questioned. It is something to see one who is so distinctly a lady in the part. Her faults are not those of "staginess." She never offends by conventional extravagance of manner, although she may fail to satisfy from want of experience and thorough possession of the resources of her art. Her acting is unequal, because she has not yet learnt to husband her powers, and distribute them to the best advantage. The management of her voice should be her especial care. Naturally light and deficient in volume and compass, great watchfulness is necessary to prevent its sinking into monotone on the one hand, or of being painfully strained into shrillness in passages of vehemence on the other. Her articulation is distinct, but she is apt to close her sentences with rather an artificial cadence. As might have been expected, her success was greater in the early than in the concluding portions of the tragedy. The playful colloquies with the nurse, and the first love passages with Romeo, including of course the balcony scene, were very happy. Her manner to her lover was full of modest and ingenuous tenderness. Her delivery of certain of the most familiar lines of the part was a trifle forced—perhaps from a fancied necessity of dwelling upon and making points of them, as her predecessors in the character have been in the habit of doing; but the words "Stay but a little, I will come again," when *Juliet* for a moment retires from the balcony, were charmingly spoken. The third act is somewhat beyond Mrs. Scott-Siddons's present means. The grand speech, "Gallop apace, you fiery-footed steeds," requires greater glow and transport of declamation than the actress can at present command. Again, the interview with the friar, and the sleeping-draught scene, taxed her powers too severely. She had formed a conception of vehemence to which she was unable to give adequate expression. The violent rendering of the chamber scene is a stage tradition from which Mrs. Scott-Siddons might venture to depart more freely. At the thought of *Tybalt's* ghost Miss Fanny Kemble used to rush from the back of the stage to the proscenium, as though driving the apparition before her, and then fall on one knee into an attitude which some poetic admirers designated her "Canova." Mrs. Scott-Siddons did not follow this reading exactly, but her manner

was needlessly violent. *Juliet* is wrought up to a pitch of nervous excitement, is hysterical indeed from her fearful imaginings; but her state of mind would rather limit her power of voice than constrain her to screams and clamour. As a matter of false reading we may note that when *Juliet* says, addressing the dagger, "Lie thou there!" she should place the weapon on the table, not thrust it, as Mrs. Scott-Siddons does, into her girdle. When *Juliet* stabs herself in the last scene, it is with Romeo's dagger, not her own. The "business" of drinking the potion and sinking back senseless on the bed was ingeniously contrived, if a trifle too prolonged. In the same way the death scene struck us as a little artificial and over-elaborate.

III.

"THE LADY OF LYONS."

[Lyceum Theatre.—September 1867.]

It can hardly be a matter for surprise that Mr. Fechter should have experienced some difficulty in finding characters that accord with the peculiarities of his histrionic faculty, or that there should have been occasional vicissitude in the success attending his career upon the English stage. In the last century Foote used to be called "an exotic," presumably because his peculiar style of acting defied classification with the manners of the players then before the town. The term is applicable to Mr. Fechter, who, with all his skill in the language of his adopted country, and the well-merited favour which his exertions have earned in England, can yet scarcely be said even now to have taken permanent root upon our stage, or to be other than a kind of theatrical alien, to be judged always as an individual, by an especial standard and from a particular point of view. It is not likely that he will ever come to be considered as the founder of a school of acting in England, or that it will be held fair to appraise his merits by tests usually applicable to native artists claim-

ing to be ranked in the first class of their profession. In contemplating Mr. Fechter's performances, the extrinsic consideration always asserts itself that in his admirable struggle with the difficulties of a foreign language, he is accomplishing a feat to which few men are equal. It is like the old-established achievement of a hornpipe in fetters ; one can only judge of the dance with reference to the hindrances in the way of its accomplishment. At the same time it is only just to recognise in Mr. Fechter an artist who has conferred many benefits upon the English stage. He has afforded a valuable study to native comedians. His example is a sort of stimulus to new conceptions of character. He has exhibited the advantage of appraising theatrical methods from a fresh standpoint. He has been in the theatre an incarnation of that ideal "intelligent foreigner" whose sage comments upon our institutions and proceedings are popularly supposed to be of such exceeding value. He has made the public acquainted with the value of grace and variety of gesture upon the stage, while he has put to rout many absurd conventions and customs which had obtained fixed acceptance among us. Even if he had done no more than make people think twice about *Hamlet's* wig, and impugned the correctness of that Brutus style of coiffure which must have come in vogue with the first French Revolution, he would have done something. But in truth Mr. Fechter has effected much more.

In regard to the characters he has supported, he has not found one more suited to his means than *Ruy Blas*, in which he made his first essay before an English audience. His success in "The Duke's Motto" led to an unfortunate selection of plays. "Bel Demonio," "The King's Butterfly," and "The Watch Cry," were found to be among the most worthless productions of the modern school of *drame* to which they pertain. Nor was Mr. Fechter more successful in his attempts upon the repertory of Frederick Lemaître, an actor of singular power, with whose especial manner of representation Mr. Fechter has indeed little in common. As *Robert Macaire*, it was clear that Mr. Fechter was rather a gentleman affecting the bravo, than, as he should be, a bravo aping the airs of a gentleman. While for the dreary horrors of such a play as "Rouge et

Noir" it was not possible for him, even with his utmost display of grace and skill and pathos, to obtain public countenance. It has thus unluckily happened that Mr. Fechter's management of the Lyceum Theatre has resulted in more failures than successes.

In producing the "Lady of Lyons" and undertaking the character of *Claude Melnotte*, it seemed manifest that Mr. Fechter had once more found a part likely to suit him, while he was further provided with an opportunity for the display of that innovative cleverness in stage arrangement which had on previous occasions gained him distinction. The applause which followed the performance left little doubt that his exertions had been upon the whole successful. It is true that Mr. Fechter is not yet quite master of his part, and has still to perfect himself in certain of *Claude Melnotte's* longer speeches; while he furnishes no additional proof that he will ever be able to surmount the difficulties of speaking English blank verse, or even to comprehend the method of its music. Still he invested the part with a value and a charm that have long seemed lost to it; his chivalrous fervour of manner, his genuine feeling, his graceful bearing, once more enlisted the sympathies of the audience on the side of a character which is in truth much more that of a scoundrel than of a hero. He reduced the fraudulence of *Claude's* proceedings by giving as much prominence as possible to the provocation he had received; while to the intensity of his love for *Pauline* he added that sort of venerative affection for his mother which is appropriate to his national character, although it has escaped development at the hands of other representatives of the gardener's son. Indeed it would seem that there is so much that is French in the character of *Claude*, that it is peculiarly fit that he should be impersonated by a Frenchman.

In some respects the play has suffered derogation by Mr. Fechter's treatment of it. He has regarded it frankly as a melodrama, and has added to it those fidgety musical accompaniments which are thought to aid displays of emotion and situations of sentiment in ordinary works of the class. Then he has made certain modifications of the scenes, with a view to greater effect: now curtailing, and now adding to

the dialogue. These changes are not invariably judicious, though they secure a more lenient impression of *Claude's* misdoings, which was probably the object contemplated. The usual stage arrangements are departed from, and new "business," occasionally of an ingenious kind, has been invented. *Claude* does not walk up and down the garden while he discourses of his palace by the Lake of Como. Nor does he appear wrapped in a military cloak in the last scene. He eschews the Hessian boots and embroidered uniform in which, as the *Prince of Como*, he has been wont to disport himself, and appears in a Court suit, with black silk stockings and powdered hair.

IV.

"THE DOGE OF VENICE."

[Drury Lane Theatre.—November 1867.]

BYRON'S "Marino Faliero" was published on the 21st of April 1821, and notwithstanding the author's express statement that he had not written and never would write with a view to the stage, the tragedy was produced by Elliston at Drury Lane on the 25th of the same month, proof-sheets having been obtained from the printer, and the parts having been studied by the actors before the play itself had been issued from the press. An injunction stopped for some nights the repetition of the performance, but the play was subsequently again represented, drawing thin houses, however, and exciting little interest. It was badly acted, and its defects as a stage play could not be overlooked. It was generally regarded as an inferior kind of "Venice Preserved," "continually recalling," as Bishop Heber wrote of it, "though certainly without eclipsing, the memory of that popular tragedy." The special characteristics upon which the poet had prided himself: that he had written a play "without love," and that there were "neither rings, nor mistakes, nor starts, nor outrageous canting villains, nor melodrama in it," were fatal to the theatrical success of his

work. He was very angry that the play should have been brought upon the stage at all. "Reproach is useless always, and irritating," he wrote to Mr. Murray; "but my feelings are very much hurt, to be dragged like a gladiator to the fate of a gladiator by that *retiarus*, Mr. Elliston. . . . I would have flung it into the fire rather than have had it represented."

In spite of the ill success attending its first production, however, the play has been occasionally repeated in London and in the provinces, and in 1829 it was adapted by M. Casimir Delavigne, and transferred to the stage of the Théâtre de la Porte Saint Martin, Paris, when M. Ligier appeared as the Doge, and the part of *Angiolina* (the name being changed to *Eléna*) was sustained by M^{de}. Dorval. M. Delavigne took pains to introduce into the tragedy those stock expedients of the theatre in the shape of love passages, mistakes, starts and melodramatic effects, which the poet had been so careful to omit. The liberties taken with the original were considerable. The *Doge's* nephew, now called *Fernando*, appears as the successful lover of the *Duchess*, whose guilt, although it may subject her to the reprobation of the audience, at any rate affords opportunities for histrionic display. *Michael Steno*, the libeller of the *Duchess*, who is almost a mute in Byron's tragedy, assumes importance in M. Delavigne's version, figuring as a disappointed lover and dissipated nobleman, who ultimately slays *Fernando* in a duel, and affords thereby an additional motive for the *Doge's* conspiracy against the State. He has to avenge a murdered kinsman as well as an insulted wife, not knowing of the injury he has sustained at the hands of the faithless *Fernando* and the guilty *Duchess*. Then a grand masked ball at the house of the patrician *Lioni* is introduced, and amidst the festivities the *Doge* plays chess with *Israel Bertuccio*, while in low whispers they arrange the details of the revolt. Previous to his death the *Doge* has to learn and to forgive the trespass of his wife, and is thus permitted the manifestation of other emotions than the monotonous hatred and thirst for revenge which animate him from the first scene to the last of the original play. Altogether the adaptation, written in verse, without a change of scene in any of its five acts, is the

work of an ingenious dramatist, and as a play to be acted rather than to be read, possesses merits much in advance of the English original, either in its published form, or in the greatly condensed edition brought upon the stage by Elliston.

The play called the "Doge of Venice," by Mr. Bayle Bernard, is composed of Lord Byron's tragedy, much retrenched, with many of the modifications of M. Delavigne, supplemented by certain matter of Mr. Bernard's own contriving, and several choruses selected from such operas of Donizetti, Mercadante, and Verdi as have any sort of connection with Venetian subjects. It is clearly impossible to avoid the reflection that we have here a hodge-podge of a very unsatisfactory kind, in which justice is done neither to Lord Byron, to M. Delavigne, to the composers concerned, nor, it may be added, to Mr. Bernard himself, who has given frequent proof of his capacity as a dramatist, and who would probably have done better if he had relied solely upon his own skill to construct a melodramatic entertainment with "spectacular effects," such as the manager of Drury Lane seems to have desired. Hampered by the necessity for introducing showy scenes of Venice, and affording opportunities for musical illustration, Mr. Bernard has produced rather a clumsy sort of work. He requires no less than thirteen scenes to tell the story which only occupies five in M. Delavigne's adaptation. In two of his scenes not a word is spoken; they are entirely devoted to dumb show, ballet, and spectacle, and are prefaced by long and tiresome "carpenter's scenes," in which the sole object appears to be to occupy time enough to allow of the elaborate "set" that is to follow being duly placed upon the stage. Occasionally we seem to be listening to an opera in which the chief characters have become suddenly indisposed, and only the chorus have the full command of their voices. After the startling brazen music of Verdi, the spoken dialogue is reduced to curious tameness and vapidness, although the actors, to do them justice, by their vehement ranting and mouthing do their best to compete with the trombones and big drums. The illicit loves of the *Duchess* and *Fernando* are purged of offence. The young man is made the victim of a hopeless

and unrequited passion, while he is reduced in rank, and, no longer a kinsman of the *Doge*, appears only as his adopted son—a foundling without claim to noble lineage. The *Doge's* motive for vengeance is thus brought nearer to its proportions in the original play, although it is hinted that his treason is stimulated by his sympathy with the suffering of the oppressed people of Venice, who on their side are also supposed to be much inflamed by *Steno's* attack upon the fair fame of the *Duchess*. This alteration, however, is of little real assistance to the play, and the whole of the first scene, descriptive of the popular sentiments, and at once introducing the audience to the conspiracy, before the *Doge* has yet appeared upon the stage, might with advantage be omitted.

Mr. Phelps played with great vigour and met with much applause. Those who have hitherto admired his efforts are not likely to be disappointed with his representation of the *Doge*. His speeches are very long, however, and were occasionally listened to somewhat apathetically, being only made endurable, apparently, by the reflection that after such large excerpts from Lord Byron, the efforts of the scene-painter and the ballet-master would again be speedily called into action.

V.

“THE WAY TO GET MARRIED.”

[Olympic Theatre.—November 1867.]

MR. CHARLES MATHEWS having obtained so much applause by his performance of *Young Wilding*, it was only to be expected that on the withdrawal of “The Liar,” recourse would again be had to the repertory of comedies of the last century, with the view of providing the actor with another congenial part. Accordingly, Morton’s comedy of “The Way to Get Married” has now been revived, its five acts being reduced to three, and the character of *Tangent* allotted to Mr. Mathews. “The Way to Get Married”

was originally produced at Covent Garden in 1796, when it was received with remarkable favour, being played some forty nights during its first season; in subsequent years it was repeated with hardly less success. "Gentleman" Lewis's *Tangent*, "Irish" Johnstone's *M'Query*, Quick's *Toby Allspice*, Fawcett's *Dick Dashall*, and Munden's *Caustic* long continued to be cherished in the memories of old playgoers. At the same time critics were not wanting to censure that degeneration of comedy into farce which now became conspicuous in dramatic literature, and especially marked the works of Morton, Holcroft, and Reynolds. Gifford in his "Baviad" selects these playwrights for peculiar reprobation. He condemns in his fiercest manner that "catchword" mode of indicating character which was now established as one of the most popular humours of the theatre. "Will posterity believe," he demands, "that this facetious triumvirate could think nothing more to be necessary to the construction of a play than an eternal repetition of some contemptible vulgarity such as 'That's your sort!' 'Hey, damme!' 'What's to pay?' 'Keep moving,' &c. . . . They will never credit that these drivellings of idiotism, these 'catchwords,' should actually preserve their respective authors from being hissed off the stage. They will not believe that an English audience could be so besotted, so brutified, as to receive such senseless exclamations with bursts of laughter, with peals of applause. I cannot believe it myself, though I have witnessed it."

In spite of Gifford's wrath, however, the "catchword" comedies, supported by excellent actors, pleased the town, and for many years held their own upon the stage. Their place in literature, however, was of a more precarious kind. They can hardly now number any readers whatever, and have probably not been reprinted since they were first issued from the press, except for purely theatrical purposes. But then they were never intended to be read. They would be almost as much out of place in a general library as the footlights themselves. They belong exclusively to the playhouse and the players. They reflect real life and manners in no way; as pictures of the period in which they were written they have no kind of value. They are mere

theatrical contrivances for the display of the actors' peculiarities, for winning laughter at any price from the audience, and dismissing them amused with the slightest possible tax upon their reflective powers. In this way, no doubt, the works of Gifford's "triumvirate" and others served their turn; but their turn would seem to be over. The revival of "The Way to Get Married" is not likely to be attended by the success which followed the performance of Foote's "Liar." But then Foote was a writer of far superior capacity to Morton, and if the comedies of the former were less loaded with satirical portraiture and personal allusions, which won them favour from the crowd on their first production, but which are now so much dead weight and detriment to them, they might hope to keep the stage in right of the genuine wit and humour to be found in them long after the works of the "catchword" playwrights have been consigned to oblivion. Even now an attempt to produce another of Foote's plays might prove to be a more advantageous experiment than the revival of such a comedy as Morton's "Way to Get Married."

Even of its class "The Way to Get Married" is not a very good specimen. Its plot is so improbable as to be almost preposterous, while it fails utterly to interest the audience, even if it comes anywhere near their comprehension. Everything is sacrificed to farcical incident and extravagance of character. The dialogue is occasionally smart, without being really witty; it has rather the shine of a spangle than the sparkle of a diamond. In the retrenched version of the play produced at the Olympic, brevity is gained at some sacrifice of intelligibility, but then it is clear that the original proportions of the comedy would be simply insufferable to a modern audience. The serious characters, introduced in the first instance as a sort of counterpoise to the frivolity of the comic scenes, are much cut down; one of them, *Faulkner*, the father of the heroine, being omitted altogether. With *Faulkner* is of course excised a disagreeable scene, in which, overcome by misfortune, he endeavours to induce his daughter to commit suicide. The whole comedy hangs loosely together, and is without the coherence even of a farce,

while now and then, as in the scene where *Tangent* is arrested as a madman and the characters run across the stage in pursuit of each other, it sinks to the level of mere pantomime.

As *Tangent*, the flighty impulsive gentleman who is always carried away by his imagination, and adopts a different profession in every scene, Mr. Mathews was pleasant and amusing without rousing any great enthusiasm. The character is susceptible of more heartiness and force of treatment than the actor has at command. The part bears some resemblance to that of *Young Wilding* in "The Liar;" the falsehoods of the one, however, are, as it were, prospective, and of the other retrospective. *Tangent's* imaginings relate to what he will do; *Wilding* fibs as to what he has already done. *Tangent* demands of his representative, therefore, a certain visionary glow and impulse of manner which are not needed in *Young Wilding*, and are somewhat out of the reach of Mr. Mathews's histrionic faculty. That the actor acquitted himself with grace and skill and liveliness, however, it is hardly necessary to say. Mr. Addison was a good *Caustic*, and Mr. Neville played *Dick Dashall* with vigour; his costume needs revision however—a hat of modern shape is out of place in a comedy of the last century. *Toby Allspice* is sustained by a Mr. M. Robson, a comedian of rather a hard kind, who keeps his eyes upon the pit with a persistence that is far from admirable. Mr. H. Wigan took pains with the part of *M'Query*; it is hard to understand how it could ever have been found amusing. Miss Farren appeared as *Clementina Allspice*, a rather ungrateful part, which is so extravagant to begin with that the actress should be careful to check all inclination to caricature in its representation. In animation, however, and desire to please Miss Farren never fails.

VI.

"THE SCHOOL OF REFORM."

[St. James's Theatre.—November 1867.]

A COMPRESSED version of Morton's comedy of "The School of Reform" has been produced in order to exhibit Mr. J. S. Clarke, an American comedian, in the part of *Tyke*, the Yorkshireman. Originally performed at Covent Garden in 1805, "The School of Reform, or, How to Rule a Husband," obtained public favour less by reason of its own merits perhaps, than on account of the excellence of Emery, the famous actor of countrymen, in this same character of *Tyke*. The plot of the comedy is of that complicated kind which would seem to have been very acceptable to the audiences of half a century ago. A tangled skein of stories is, as it were, flung upon the stage for the playgoers to unravel and entertain themselves with as best they may. Farcical incident and sentimental situation come upon the scene alternately. The curtain seems to rise midway in the story. A variety of events has happened long precedent to the moment chosen for the introduction of the *dramatis personæ* to the audience. The characters are displayed enmeshed in difficulties, the precise origin and significance of which have to be gathered by such hints as may be let fall, or such recitals as may be indulged in during the progress of the play. Obscure enough in its original five acts, "The School of Reform" when reduced to three becomes wholly unintelligible; but there exists no reason for thinking that the St. James's audience would have liked it better if they had been permitted to understand it more. The chief question arising out of a dreary representation is one of time. Few would be inclined to complain if "The School of Reform" were to be still further abbreviated, even if the nature of its fable should be in such wise rendered additionally perplexing. But perhaps the best way now of dealing with the play

would be to restore it forthwith to the shelf from which it need never have been removed.

If years ago the involved story or group of stories of "The School of Reform," turning upon the profligacy of *Lord Avonmore*, the progress of the drunken horse-stealer and returned convict *Robert Tyke*, the domestic differences of *Mr. and Mrs. Ferment*, the woes of the betrayed *Mrs. St. Clair*, the humours of *General Tarragon*, and the loves of *Frederick* and *Julia* enlisted the sympathies and moved the tears or the mirth of crowded audiences to an extent that now appears surprising, it should be remembered that the players originally engaged in the performance of the comedy were of great fame in their profession, and did their utmost for the parts assigned to them. The *Tyke* of Emery was supported by the *Avonmore* of Cooke, the *Ferment* of Lewis, the *Frederick* of Charles Kemble, and the *Tarragon* of Munden; while the ladies of the play were represented by Mrs. Davenport, Mrs. Gibbs, and Miss Brunton. In its own day the situations of the comedy hardly wore the faded, threadbare, conventional aspect they assume under the regard of a modern generation; while doubtless the efforts and talents of the actors gave life and point to speeches and dialogue which now seem insipid and dull enough.

We presume that Mr. Clarke's *Tyke* has found favour in America, and that he has therefore been induced to submit his rendering of the part to a London public. Upon the whole, his performance is likely to increase his reputation in this country, although his merits will scarcely secure very prolonged toleration for the comedy to which *Tyke* pertains. Certainly the Yorkshire horse-stealer is the least like a lay figure of all the personages in "The School of Reform." Still he is unreal enough—a mere creature of the theatre. The character is made up of inconsistencies. Steeped in vice in the early scenes, prompt to undertake any deed of villany, stealing snuff boxes and appropriating purses, he suddenly shines forth in the last act a model of virtue, for little other reason apparently than that he has donned a flowered chintz waistcoat, time out of mind a sort of whole armour of righteousness to the rustic of the stage. Thereupon he exposes crime, denounces evil doers, declines

pecuniary gifts, slaps his chest and enunciates fine sentiments, after the long-established manner of histrionic moralists. Mr. Clarke, subduing his inclination for grimace, and avoiding the caricature and buffoonery to which he condescends as *Major De Boots*, acquitted himself respectably and earned the applause of the audience. He has fairly mastered the country dialect of the part, and avails himself skilfully of the opportunities for dramatic display that it affords. In the situations of the comedy that most trench upon melodrama he was occasionally powerful, though his hard unmusical voice lends itself reluctantly to anything like pathetic expression. An actor, however, has difficult work before him when he endeavours to bring such a character as *Tyke* within the circle of modern sympathies. Mr. Clarke is probably as good a representative of the part as can now be found in London.

VII

"NO THOROUGHFARE."

[Adelphi Theatre.—December 1867.]

ADAPTATION to the stage being generally the fate of the popular novel at some period of its career, it is not surprising that Mr. Dickens's works should almost invariably have undergone the process of conversion into plays, although this proceeding has now and then taken place entirely without the author's sanction, and indeed in disregard of his most earnest remonstrances. The readers of "*Nicholas Nickleby*" may remember the warm attack upon adapters put into the mouth of the hero of that story, on the occasion of his encountering at the *Crummels'* farewell supper the literary gentleman who had dramatised in his time two hundred and forty-seven novels as fast as they had come out, some of them faster than they had come out, and "*was a literary gentleman in consequence.*" The British novelist being without dramatic copyright in his productions—wholly unprotected by law in such respect—Mr. Dickens

had nothing to do but (relieving his mind by as indignant a protest against the existing state of things as occurred to him at the moment) to submit to such outrage and degradation of his creations as the dullest of dramatists might choose to inflict upon them. In later days, however, he was enabled in some degree to combat his adapters by helping to forestall them. Thus, the Christmas books were severally dramatised by Mr. Albert Smith from proof sheets supplied expressly by the author, and the plays were brought upon the stage simultaneously with the publication of the stories. In this way unauthorised adaptations were at any rate anticipated. Later still, Mr. Dickens himself aided and supervised the dramatising of his "Tale of Two Cities" by Mr. Tom Taylor. Until the present time, however, he has not presented himself to the public as his own dramatist. Now, however, we find the story of "No Thoroughfare," the Christmas number of *All the Year Round*, the joint production of Mr. Dickens and Mr. Wilkie Collins, appearing upon the stage of the Adelphi Theatre, the adaptation being announced as the work of the original authors. As Mr. Dickens was part-contriver of the story, so he is now part-adapter of it to the theatre.

The literary styles of the two writers are so dissimilar that it would not be difficult for an ingenious reader to apportion to each novelist his particular share in the production in question, though of course there would be some risk of error and misconception in so doing. But the fact that two hands and two minds have been at work in "No Thoroughfare" is manifest enough throughout its pages. It is not a very compact story, and is in fact easily divisible into two distinct narratives, dealing with separate interests, characters, and incidents. With a little unpicking of the stitches tacking the two tales together, they would entirely fall apart and stand confessed as two novelettes, each complete in itself, one of which might be entitled "A Story of the Foundling Hospital," and the other "An Adventure in Switzerland," or some such names. There is a sort of incompatibility of temper, so to speak, between the works, and their union is effected with some difficulty. They sunder upon the slightest provocation, and it is only by

rather violent means that they can be brought together again. The exigencies of one story are rather detrimental to the other, and in regard to the characters, we have continually to bear in mind *Mr. Puff's* admonition relative to one of his *dramatis personæ*, "not to be too sure that he *is* a Beefeater." The requirements of one author rather embarrass the arrangements of the other, and the simple Beefeater of Mr. Dickens has to develop into something quite different in order to enable Mr. Collins to go on with his part of the narrative. Yet that the work succeeded in obtaining a large amount of public favour cannot be gainsaid. Indeed, with all its defects, its merits are very considerable.

The dramatic version of "No Thoroughfare" is in six acts, and occupies more than four hours in representation. The authors have been at great pains to make their plot thoroughly intelligible to the audience, so that even those who may visit the Adelphi unversed in the Christmas number of *All the Year Round*, can yet readily follow the complications and situations of the drama of "No Thoroughfare." In this respect there has been some needless insistence on small details of the narrative, and perspicuity has been gained at the cost of dull prolixity. The playgoer is less heedful about trifling discrepancies and incongruities in the entertainment set before him than is the novel-reader in relation to the pages occupying him. There is no stopping or turning back in a drama to see that all has been correctly and coherently ordered. Upon the whole, "No Thoroughfare," not being in itself particularly available for theatrical purposes, has been dramatised with much skill. The play is not, of course, a production of very high class, but it might be tolerably interesting if reduced to reasonable proportions. The defects of the story as a literary work are not concealed in its new shape. It is still plain that the Foundling Hospital and Switzerland have been brought together in a very curious kind of way, strange bedfellows introduced to each other by an imperative necessity. Certain changes have been made in the work, and the dialogue has been most inordinately lengthened and elaborated. *Joey Ladle* becomes a prominent character, and appears as the lover of *Sarah Goldstraw*. The clock-

lock is transferred to the monastery of St. Bernard. The motive for *Obenreizer's* theft arises out of his desire to make extravagant gifts of jewels to his ward *Marguerite*. These and other modifications are not altogether of a very commendable kind, and the necessity for introducing "front scenes" while complicated "sets" are in course of preparation, has induced recourse to prolonged conversations that are as wearisome in themselves as they are useless in regard to the furthering of the business of the play. Several scenes might with advantage be excised altogether. Indeed it is manifest that condensation must be brought about with a free and firm hand, if due consideration is to be paid to the powers of endurance of the public.

No pains have been spared by the Adelphi management in the production of "No Thoroughfare." Mr. Fechter has been retained to support the part of *Obenreizer*, Miss Carlotta Leclercq has been added to the company in order that *Marguerite* might have a competent representative, and Mr. Henry Neville has been withdrawn from the Olympic Theatre to appear as *George Vendale*. Mr. Webster has emerged from his retirement to personate *Joey Ladle*, Mrs. Mellon plays *Sally Goldstraw*, and Mr. Belmore gives ample significance to the character of *Mr. Bintrey*, the lawyer. Mr. and Mrs. Billington appear as *Walter Wilding* and the veiled lady, his mother, respectively. These characters were all very well played; Mr. Fechter's *Obenreizer* being an especially finished and vigorous performance. *Joey* is perhaps found to be less humorous on the stage, and his frequently repeated joke about the pores of his skin is less effective than had been anticipated from perusal of the story. But nothing could have been better than Mr. Webster's rendering of the part. The scenery by Mr. Grieve is entirely new, and the view of the Alpine pass in which *Obenreizer* attempts the murder of Vendale is certainly as beautiful a picture as has ever been seen upon the stage.

VIII.

"DEARER THAN LIFE."

[Queen's Theatre.—January 1868.]

WHEN an author undertakes to write a play in which a particular actor shall be provided with a part exactly suited to his histrionic peculiarities, and in which full opportunities shall be afforded him for a renewal of previous successes, it is vain to expect that the work will be distinguished by any great novelty of design or originality of treatment. It is inevitable that the dramatist must keep the past well in mind, and relinquishing all inclination for experiment, adhere closely to beaten tracks and to conditions which have already secured beyond question the countenance of the playgoing public. He is as a tailor who is called upon to make a new coat for a customer. The new garment may be somewhat different in hue, and in the arrangement of its braid and buttons some slight variations may be permissible, but substantially the cut and pattern of previous clothes must be accurately followed. The wearer of the coat will present himself to the world with a certain fresh gloss upon him, but his aspect will not be materially changed, and certainly he will be recognisable by his friends instantaneously.

The new serio-comic drama in three acts by Mr. Byron, entitled "Dearer than Life," has been confessedly contrived with the view of furnishing the popular comedian, Mr. Toole, with a character suited to the full display of his especial method of representation. Mr. Byron has in this respect succeeded admirably. He has taken Mr. Toole's measure with curious exactness. The actor has been rarely so well fitted with dramatic clothing, or been enabled to appear to so much advantage before an audience. At the same time Mr. Byron's work has little on the score of invention to recommend it to public esteem. The story of "Dearer than Life" is a tessellation of very familiar matters. The loud applause with which the performance was greeted,

however, would seem to demonstrate that a modern audience is quite willing to be entertained by a skilful combination of old expedients. Indeed, it appears to be difficult to exhaust the attractiveness of really striking situations. "Dearer than Life" deals with persons of what may be called the lower middle class. The action is conducted for the most part in one of those "back-shop" interiors to which playgoers have been introduced by a long course of dramas. The plot is a close following of "The Porter's Knot." A prodigal son, by his evil courses, reduces his old and worthy parents to extreme poverty, and then returns prosperous from the colonies just in time to aid them as the misery of their position is becoming insupportable, and to bring the play to a happy close. Mr. Toole's part is that of the father of the prodigal. *Michael Garner* not only gives up the savings of his life and reduces himself to penury to save his son from shame, but he accuses himself of the forgeries really committed by the young man, in order that a knowledge of her child's guilt may not break the heart of his doting mother. The situation is pathetic in the extreme. *Garner* is one of those cheery old men, genial under all kinds of hardship and suffering; with whom Mr. Dickens's *Trotty Veck* and *Caleb Plummer* have made the public well acquainted. Naturally of a light-hearted disposition, he is called upon to affect additional high spirits in order that he may conceal from his wife and niece—the affianced wife of his absent son—how terribly his afflictions prey upon his mind and exhaust his strength. He tries to jest while his heart is aching piteously; he laughs with tears in his eyes, his face twitching with anguish; he affects repletion while he is in truth half starving with hunger. Mr. Toole first became known to the public as a follower of Mr. Wright's humorous manner, in those uproarious and unrefined farces for which the Adelphi stage was at one time famous. Only occasionally and of later years has he been enabled to demonstrate his possession of subtler powers and more artistic views of acting. His performance of *Michael Garner*, notwithstanding the deficiency of the character in novelty, will tend to a higher estimate of his ability. Nothing could have been better than much of his acting, especially in the later scenes

of the play. His broken-down condition, occasionally sinking into utter despondency, and then enlivened by spasmodic fits of gaiety, was portrayed with much skill. When fainting from want of food, he suddenly remembers that to indulge his appetite would exhaust the slender provisions of his family and leave them without subsistence for the next day, and is driven to pretend that he has lately enjoyed an abundant meal, and would infinitely prefer smoking his pipe to eating his dinner, the actor's simple natural manner fairly carried away the house, and a storm of applause interrupted the performance. The defects in Mr. Toole's acting arise from over-anxiety, apparently. He is a little too much bent upon making all the points of his part tell thoroughly upon the audience. Thus it happened occasionally that his more obvious bids for applause merited less recognition of that kind, than unobtrusive passages upon the effect of which, probably, the actor had not much reckoned. Moreover, Mr. Toole has to contend against his own reputation as a favourite performer of farce. Some of the audience are too prompt to greet his every utterance with laughter when, in such a part as *Michael Garner*, mirth is by no means the most appropriate tribute to be invariably paid to the exertions of the player.

"Dearer than Life" is a great deal too long, and is not very admirably constructed. The two first acts might be safely compressed into one, and the sudden intoxication of old Garner, in the course of which he unconsciously reveals to his wife the fact of his own innocence and his son's guilt, is not very ingeniously devised, and has the further disadvantage of lowering the old man in the estimation of the audience. Mr. Byron's dialogue is of a sufficiently animated kind; but he should be adjured to avoid the puns and verbal pleasantries to which he is prone.

The play was altogether very well acted. Mr. Wyndham was quiet and natural as *Charley Garner*, the erring and afterwards penitent son, while Mr. Irving, as his evil genius, a scampish betting man, was seen to advantage. Mr. Lionel Brough gave great force and finish to the "character part" of an irreclaimable old drunkard, the brother of *Michael Garner*. Miss Hodson looked well and invested with sufficient pathos the part of *Lucy Garner*, the heroine

of the drama. And Mr. Clayton distinguished himself by his staid and reposed manner as *Mr. Kedgely*, the city merchant, whose moneys young *Garner* has appropriated. The success of the production was indisputable.

IX.

“THE HYPOCRITE.”

[Drury Lane Theatre.—February 1868.]

IN various guises Molière’s “*Tartuffe*” has succeeded in maintaining a place in the repertory of the English stage. The first version of the comedy was produced at the Theatre Royal in 1670, and was called “*Tartuffe ; or, the French Puritan.*” The title-page of the play, with greater frankness than obtains among modern adapters, describes it as “written in French by Molière, and rendered into English, with much addition and advantage, by M. Medbourne, servant to his Royal Highness the Duke of York.” Cibber’s “*Nonjuror*,” produced in 1717, was founded upon Medbourne’s version of “*Tartuffe*,” with considerable changes. Cibber himself sustained the part of *Dr. Wolf*, and the famous players Booth, Mills, Mrs. Oldfield, and Mrs. Porter undertook the other important characters. For his somewhat servile dedication to the King, Cibber received a present of £200, and he attributed his subsequent appointment to the laureateship to the persecution he encountered at the hands of the Nonjurors and Jacobites for having written a play in favour of the Hanoverian succession. The prologue, by Nicholas Rowe, disclaimed any intention to offend either political party, and commenced with the lines—

To-night, ye Whigs and Tories, both be safe,
Nor hope at one another’s cost to laugh.
We mean to souse old Satan and the Pope ;
They’ve no relations here or friends, we hope.

Still the play obtained for Cibber many bitter enemies, although its success upon the stage was indisputable. After

some years the "Nonjuror" became obsolete; Popery and treason had lost much of their old significance, and Methodism was deemed a much more marked subject for satirical treatment. In this way the real spirit of Molière's work was in a great measure revived. Isaac Bickerstaffe altered the "Nonjuror," and gave the name of "The Hypocrite" to his new version of the comedy. Molière's *Madame Pernelle*, who had no counterpart in Cibber's play, reappeared upon the stage as *Old Lady Lambert*, and the speeches of *Dr. Cantwell* were a close rendering of the original lines of *Tartuffe*. By Garrick's desire a new part was provided for the admired low comedian Weston, and the ever popular *Mawworm* then first stepped upon the boards. The comic sermon declaimed by this character in the last scene formed no part of Bickerstaffe's plan, however, and was not introduced until many years after the first representation of "The Hypocrite." It was not, as some suppose, designed to be a caricature of the Rev. Edward Irving's manner in the pulpit, nor did it originate with Liston in his rendering of the part of *Mawworm*. Indeed, the mock sermon was first heard many years before Mr. Irving ever preached, being delivered on the opening night of the Lyceum Theatre in 1809. Charles Mathews the elder, in his "Autobiographical Remains," has given an account of the performance. He had been brought up among Dissenters and was the *Mawworm* of the night. He introduced the sermon suddenly, without even giving his brother actors notice of his intention, imitating the voice and manner, and following even the words, of an eccentric Methodist preacher named Berridge, who late in the last century was occupying Whitfield's Chapel in Tottenham Court Road, and to whose sermons the player as a boy had often been constrained to listen. The interpolation may be regarded as the most successful effort of "gag" ever known upon the stage. It was adopted by all subsequent *Mawworms*, and at one time a fashion prevailed of demanding an encore of the sermon, its popularity with the audience was of so unbounded a kind.

The latest English version of Molière's comedy was a very faithful rendering of the original by Mr. Oxenford, produced at the Haymarket Theatre in 1851, and affording

Mr. Webster an opportunity of greatly distinguishing himself in the part of Tartuffe. This edition of the play, however, though very favourably received, has not succeeded in ousting Bickerstaffe's comedy from its place in public regard. “The Hypocrite,” frequently played at Sadler's Wells under Mr. Phelps's management, has now been revived at Drury Lane Theatre, and the actor has resumed the part of *Doctor Cantwell* and introduced to a West End public a representation long since familiar to the audiences of Clerkenwell.

“The Hypocrite” is now played in three acts, many of the scenes being condensed, and the dialogue between *Charlotte* and *Seyward* being for the most part omitted. The story, however, is sufficiently intelligible, while the performance gains in briskness by compression. The original *Cantwell* was Mr. King, and later-representatives of the character have been Messrs. Dowton and Farren. Mr. Phelps takes a coarser view of the part than formerly prevailed. He is careless about preserving the oily, silky manner which was once thought indispensable. He is even at some pains so to paint his face as to look repulsive, while his manner is systematically harsh and rude. About Mr. Farren's *Cantwell* there was always an air of sleek refinement and polished piety that made his reception into the house of *Sir John Lambert* seem to be a not unreasonable proceeding. That Mr. Phelps's *Cantwell* should even obtain admission to a gentleman's drawing-room—to say nothing of being accepted as the suitor of his daughter, and made the trustee of his entire fortune—is rather an outrage upon credibility, unless the audience are prepared to regard *Sir John Lambert* as weak even to imbecility. Moreover, this rugged manner of representing the hypocrite diminishes the contrast which should be effected by the grossness of *Mawworm's* fanaticism seen beside the more subtle sanctimoniousness of his master and exemplar. Still, accepting Mr. Phelps's view of the character, it must be admitted that his performance is theatrically effective and marked with much power. His chief success is in the last scene, when he stands at bay, his mask thrown off, and defies his antagonists to do their worst. In this portion of the play Mr. Phelps roused the house to great enthusiasm.

Mrs. Herman Vezin is sufficiently animated as *Charlotte*, though she is without the grand "quality" air which has distinguished former representatives of the part. *Charlotte* is almost entirely the invention of Cibber, and was long regarded as one of the most effective and attractive coquettes of the stage. Mrs. Oldfield, Mrs. Woffington, Mrs. Abington, and more recently Mrs. Nisbett, have in turn given lustre to the character.

X.

"PLAY."

[Prince of Wales's Theatre.—February 1868.]

THE name of this comedy prompted expectation that a modern reflex was contemplated of some such dramatic homily upon the vices of gaming as, in the eyes of the last century, gave value to Mr. Edward Moore's tragedy of "*The Gamester*:" a gloomy production little known to the present generation of playgoers, although it kept its place upon the stage for long years, more especially as a kind of depressing preparation for the excitements of Christmas pantomime, at a time when managers were wont to force their audiences through a prescribed course of dreariness and misery, by way of stimulating their appetite for lighter forms of entertainment. Mr. Robertson, however, has not proposed to himself to take up Mr. Moore's parable. He lays no claim to be ranked with the author of "*The Gamester*" as a benefactor of society, a moral teacher and preacher warning mankind from pernicious courses. If he shows vice her own image it is in a by no means disagreeable looking-glass. "*Play*" is indeed less serious in its nature, less marked by dolorous situations, making fewer appeals to the sympathetic emotions of the audience than any of the author's former works. He has aimed to amuse rather than to stir or to edify. The new comedy is very slight in subject. Its plot is not interesting on its own account, and seems to have been concocted only

for the excuse it furnishes for bringing upon the stage certain scenes, incidents, and persons entertaining enough, but not essentially dramatic in character. Mr. Robertson's design apparently has been to set before his audience, in a dramatic form, the humours of life at a German gambling watering-place, such as the Kickleburys in their travels about the Rhine found at Noirbourg, or as Becky Sharp, in her continental wanderings, discovered at Pumpnickel. This plan has been carried out very fairly, and altogether "Play" was well received, and may be regarded as a success; at the same time the fact must be admitted that the audience experienced a sense of disappointment, reasonable or unreasonable we need not stop to consider, that the author should have ventured upon a departure from the form of construction and the class of drama with which he is identified by his "Caste" and "Ours."

If there yet exists any dramatic connoisseurs who lay stress upon the importance of the "unities," they may be gratified to learn that the scene of the new comedy is never moved from the neighbourhood of the German watering-place, and that all the incidents of the drama are supposed to occur within the space of twenty-four hours. A worthless adventurer and blackleg, calling himself the *Chevalier Brown*, has been singularly unlucky at the tables. He has left his wife, a popular actress earning a large salary, behind him in London, and concealing the fact of his marriage, disports himself abroad as a bachelor, and indulges in very lavish dissipation of the money with which she has supplied him. He suddenly discovers that *Rosie*, the niece of *Bruce Fanquehere*, an impecunious and exceedingly disreputable member of the British aristocracy, has, unknown to herself or her uncle, become the heiress of a large fortune. *The Chevalier*, urged on by his necessities, contemplates bigamy. *Rosie's* property tempts him, and his design is favoured by the fact that his wife has undertaken a professional engagement, to extend over many months in the United States. There are obstacles in the way of the *Chevalier's* plans, however. *Rosie* has given her heart to an honest and modest young gentleman of fortune, one *Frank Price*. Moreover, the *Chevalier's* wife, *Mrs. Brown*—otherwise the famous actress *Miss Amanda*

Tarleton—whose love for her scoundrel husband is of a most devoted and infatuated kind, has postponed her trip to America and come upon the scene most unexpectedly and inopportunately. By a rather inartistic device *Rosie* is made to believe that *Mrs. Brown* is not the wife of the *Chevalier*, but of *Frank Price*. The lovers are, of course, only severed, and the exposure of the *Chevalier* only delayed, for a while. In the end the requirements of poetic justice are so far satisfied that the curtain falls upon the reconciliation of *Rosie* and *Frank*, and the forgiveness of the peccant *Brown* by his fond wife: a fate much too good for so callous a sinner, whose penitence at the last confessedly springs more from regard for the actress's large salary than from any really commendable change in his moral nature.

It is clear that the story of "Play" is but an attenuated thread upon which to hang four acts. The title—although its monosyllabic nature probably finds it favour in the sight of the author—is not really very appropriate to the production. A clever representation of a rouge-et-noir table is introduced in the third act, and one of the characters, it is not quite plain which, succeeds in breaking the bank, but the story is not greatly affected by these circumstances. Nor does the comedy gain much in interest from the rather farcical humours of *Mr. Bodmin Todder*, a rich dyspeptic tradesman on his travels, and his companion *Mrs. Kinpeck*, a spiteful widow with mercenary designs upon the purses of her acquaintances. Moreover, the incidents arising from the *Hauptman Stockstadt's* entire ignorance of English, and the *Graf Von Staufenburg's* extremely limited knowledge of that language, are a trifle too extravagant for comedy. Still "Play" has its merits. In parts it is smartly written, and is not without indications of a certain kind of humour. If the situations are of a weaker kind than the audiences of the Prince of Wales's have been accustomed to, they are yet not hackneyed, while the characters are strongly marked and well developed, and of themselves, and without reference to their share in the conduct of the plot, such as arrest attention.

The play was, for the most part, very well acted. Mr. Bancroft represents the *Chevalier Brown* with tolerable

effect, although his anxiety to be careful and to do his author justice sometimes induces him to make overlong pauses and to speak with needless deliberation. In the part of the *Honourable Bruce Fanquehere*, Mr. Hare finds an opportunity for presenting the public with another specimen of his skill in elaborate character painting. Mr. Bruce, with all his viciousness and utter want of principle, is yet master of a certain well-bred gentlemanly manner which Mr. Hare is heedful never to lose sight of, and to keep constantly under the notice of the audience. *Rosie* and *Frank* are sustained by Miss Marie Wilton and Mr. Montague, if with a little over consciousness of their youthful simplicity, still with much pleasant animation and picturesqueness.

The scene in the ruined castle in the second act, where the lovers bill and coo, eat bon-bons and chocolate, and sing German songs together, is certainly as pretty and graceful as anything in the whole play or in any of the author's previous works. Mr. Blakely's method of acting in the part of *Bodmin Todder* is of rather a broad old-fashioned kind of comedy, out of harmony with the more reposed and realistic manner of his playfellows. Miss Fcote was excellent as the fond wife of the "raffish" *Chevalier*.

XL.

"NARCISSE."

[Lyceum Theatre.—February 1868.]

THE new play in three acts called "Narcisse," is confessedly an adaptation by Mr. Tom Taylor of a German drama by Brachvogel, owing something of its origin to Diderot's almost forgotten novel, "Le Neveu de Rameau."

Mr. Bandmann, a German actor, has obtained some celebrity in his native country by his performance of the character of *Narcisse*, and has more recently met with success in America by appearing in an English version of Brachvogel's work. The play, with certain modifications

that can hardly have tended to its abbreviation, for it is of a most unconscionable length, has now been chosen for representation at the Lyceum, in order to introduce Mr. Bandmann in one of his most approved impersonations to the notice of the London public. Mr. Bandmann is, we believe, accounted by his friends in Germany and America a skilful delineator of the Shakspearian drama. He has been, perhaps, well advised, however, to refrain for the present from any competition with established English actors in well-known parts, and to rest his chance of securing favour in this country upon his efforts in a character that may be regarded as of his own creating. A new actor, especially if he happen to be also a foreigner, enjoys more likelihood of success in an unknown work than by attempting to attach interest to his exertions in a hackneyed part. If the new play succeeds the new actor almost invariably succeeds with it; and if it is found to fail, an inclination always arises to defer judgment upon the aspirant until a fairer opportunity has been afforded of testing his pretensions. He can, at any rate, fall back upon such claims to public applause as may be furnished by his performance of the other characters in his repertory.

The story of "*Narcisse*" deals with one of those complex Court intrigues in the reign of Louis XV. which are so constantly finding their way to the stage, although they have rarely succeeded in enlisting the sympathies or securing the comprehension of the British public. It is difficult to find any one in a London theatre, who is willing to be interested in elaborate plots that have, for their sole object, the disgrace of one of King Louis's mistresses, in order that another no more exemplary lady may profit by her rival's fall. The audience are apt to grow exceedingly indifferent as to whether *Madame Pompadour* or *Madame Dubarry* shall the more enjoy the French monarch's favour. In "*Narcisse*," matters of this kind are entered into with most laborious particularity. The stage is crowded with historical characters in gorgeous costumes, who at great length inform each other of their views and designs in regard to all the questions of their epoch. The share taken by *Narcisse* himself in these proceedings is comparatively of a simple kind. He is one of those half-witted gentlemen,

very dear to the theatre, who are addicted to a picturesque raggedness of costume, a general recklessness of speech and bearing, and who are possessed of a moral worth and innate nobility of sentiment not permitted to the other characters in the drama. *Narcisse*, early in life, has been deceived and deserted by his wife, and her treachery has disturbed his intellect and nearly broken his heart. On account of his supposed resemblance to a former successful lover of *Madame Pompadour*, he is engaged by the conspirators against the position of that royal favourite, to appear suddenly before her as an actor in a play bearing upon the events of her past life, and to be represented in the Lace Gallery at Versailles. Wincing at the drama, much after the manner of *King Claudius* during the performance of "The Mousetrap," *Madame Pompadour* suddenly discovers in the chief actor her husband, just as *Narcisse* finds in the *King's* mistress his own long-lost wife. Remorseful and penitent, the lady expires in the arms of her forgiving lord, who, over her body, utters a fierce prediction of the coming revolutionary storm which shall avenge his wrongs and sweep an iniquitous aristocracy from France—and the curtain falls.

This, the only really impressive situation in the play, is hurriedly and clumsily dealt with, and though it earned considerable applause, can hardly be accepted as compensation for the many terribly tedious scenes that had gone before. The writing is of the most feeble and prosy kind, and of all the many characters introduced, with the exception of *Narcisse*, there is hardly one that furnishes its representative with an opportunity of displaying ability. The *Duc de Choiseul* (whose name undergoes very varied pronunciation), the *Comte Dubarry*, *Baron d'Holbach*, *Diderot* himself, and the *Chevalier Grimm* appear on the stage, indulge in much vapid dialogue, and then vanish without having helped on the plot in the slightest degree, or induced the audience to regard them as other than the most oppressive nonentities. Wholesale excision of all the scenes in which *Narcisse* does not appear may make the play more endurable; but even then ample room will be left for further retrenchment. *Narcisse* himself is tiresomely loquacious. His opinions on politics, his ideas as to the

present and future of France, his satire upon the Encyclopædists, his observations as to the immortality of the soul are all out of place upon the stage, and might advantageously be omitted, or, at any rate, greatly condensed. During two very long acts the play makes hardly any progress whatever. The audience, patient and tolerant enough upon the whole, could not resist an expression of dissatisfaction when a protracted ballet was introduced in the second act, and brought the drama completely to a standstill. The many liberties taken with history in the course of "*Narcisse*" are of slight concern to a theatrical public. "*Narcisse*" is but a melodrama, and not a lively specimen of its class.

Mr. Bandmann, so far as he may be judged by his performance of "*Narcisse*," appears to be an animated actor without any special histrionic capacity not at present sufficiently represented on the English stage. His manner has about it something of an amateur's ungainliness, and his performance is not distinguished by any marked artistic character. He speaks English very respectably, with a German accent, and a certain provincial quality of pronunciation he may possibly have acquired in America. His voice is thin and hard, and does not readily lend itself to pathetic expression. Still he was effective in his half-whispered recital of the story of his wrongs, and his declamation in the last scene was forcible and fervent. His appearance is picturesque, though he is over-fond of strained attitudes, and his gestures are redundant, wanting in variety, and seldom graceful.

XII.

"RICHARD THE THIRD."

[Drury Lane Theatre.—February 1868.]

ORIGINALLY produced in the year 1700, Colley Cibber's version of Shakspeare's "*Richard the Third*" still keeps its place upon the stage, and has power to attract an

audience. The victory gained by the players over the poet in this respect has certainly been of a very indisputable kind. Burbage, as we know, was a famous *Richard* in Shakspeare's day, but from the Restoration down to the date of the production of Cibber's adaptation, there would seem to have been no attempt of any kind made to revive the tragedy. In the enumeration of the characters sustained by Betterton, *Richard the Third* is mentioned; but this was in reference to a part in a poor rhyming play called "The English Princess" by one Caryl, founded, as the author professed, on "plain Hollinshead and downright Stow," and owing nothing whatever to Shakspeare. It is a proof, however, of the neglect which had befallen the poet, that an attempt should have been made to found a play upon a subject which he had, by universal consent, as one would have thought, made his own. But at the time of the Restoration and long afterwards, we need hardly say, Shakspeare was held in very small estimation.

Cibber's play is a very curious pasticcio. It professed to contain, as the playbills of the time set forth, "the distresses and death of King Henry the Sixth; the artful acquisition of the crown by King Richard; the cruel murder of young King Edward the Fifth and his brother in the Tower; the landing of the Earl of Richmond; and the death of King Richard in the memorable battle of Bosworth Field, being the last that was fought between the houses of York and Lancaster; with many other historical passages." The first act is taken in a great measure from the "Third Part of Henry the Sixth," with extracts, as in the allusion to "Priam's curtain," from the "Second Part of Henry the Fourth," and, as in the speech about the "frosty Caucasus," from "Richard the Second." Gloster's soliloquy is of course from the original play. Cibber, however, unaccountably omitted the first four lines beginning "Now is the winter," &c., which the players have judiciously restored. We may note that for some few years the play was represented without this first act, the Master of the Revels refusing to sanction its performance on the ground that the distresses of dethroned King Henry "would put weak people too much in mind of King James, then living in France." *Edward the Fourth*, the *Duke of Clarence*, and *Margaret*

of *Anjou* are all omitted. When *Lady Anne* enters she mourns the death of King Henry the Sixth in some lines from the speech beginning "Hung be the heavens with black," spoken by the Duke of Bedford at the lying-in-state of Henry the Fifth. The scene in which Gloucester denounces Hastings is omitted, and probably on that account was afterwards made available by Rowe in his "*Jane Shore*." As the play proceeds we come upon various extracts from "Henry the Fourth," "Henry the Fifth," and "Henry the Sixth," certain of the lines of the sober-minded Chorus finding their way, strangely enough, into the mouth of the fiery *Richard*. Cibber, however, seldom suffers a quotation to pass without tinkering it more or less—generally, it would seem, from the mere love of tinkering, rather than for any more satisfactory reason. In the last act the ghosts are reduced in number and address themselves solely to *Richard*, and not, as in the original, alternately to *Richard* and *Richmond*. *Richard* is killed upon the stage and delivers a "dying speech," a great part of which is borrowed from the lines uttered by *Northumberland* in the first scene of the "Second Part of King Henry the Fourth." Of Cibber's own lines woven here and there into the tragedy the less said the better.

Cibber played *Richard* on the first production of this curious version of the play, although he was generally considered to be but a poor actor in tragedy, and his voice was always thin and weak. Having contrived "a part to tear a cat in," for such in truth his *Richard* is, it is difficult to believe that his physical resources could have been equal to the occasion, or that he could ever have obtained much personal success in the character. Subsequent *Richards* have been Quin, Ryan, Garrick, Henderson, Kemble, Kean, Cooke, Macready, and others. The popularity the work has enjoyed is clearly due less to its own merits than to the eminence of the actors who have appeared in it. Indeed, but two attempts have been made since the appearance of Cibber's play to represent the tragedy according to the original text. The first was in 1821, at Covent Garden, when Mr. Macready played *Richard*; but the experiment was not favourably regarded, and the tragedy was shelved after but two performances. A more successful

revival took place some twenty years since at Sadler's Wells, when strictly textual representations of Shakspeare were in vogue under Mr. Phelps's directorship, and Miss Glynn obtained distinction by her performance of *Margaret of Anjou*. But still Cibber's version was not permanently displaced, and was selected instead of the original for production at the Princess's Theatre in 1854, when Mr. Charles Kean was occupied with his highly embellished series of revivals of the Shakspearian drama. The original certainly presents difficulties in its last act, where the interiors of the tents of *Richard* and *Richmond* are supposed to be both simultaneously visible to the spectators. This was attempted at Sadler's Wells, however, and tents of diminutive proportions, that had rather the aspect of rival showerbaths, were pitched at opposite corners of the stage with undeniable ludicrousness of effect. The resources of modern stage management should be able to modify and amend this portion of the play. In every other respect, it is needless to say, the merits of the original quite transcend the stage version. It is true that, supposing a revival of the work as Shakspeare wrote it were to be again attempted, the audience must forego the pleasure of hearing the established points, "A little flattery sometimes does well;" "*Richard's* himself again;" "Off with his head," and others. Yet the original play offers hardly less favourable opportunities to the actor, and the value of these points has decreased in the eyes of a generation that has only a traditional notion of the importance attached to them by the eminent players of the past.

The performances of Cibber's play now taking place at Drury Lane have been received with much applause. Many playgoers have doubtless been attracted to the theatre by curiosity concerning a work which has acquired so singular a fame. The spectators are found to watch with a kind of amused interest the progress of the scenes and the delivery of the especial points, held in such extravagant estimation in times past. A certain irreverent disposition to regard "Off with his head!" and similar despotic explosions somewhat in the light of jests is occasionally to be detected, but upon the whole the tragedy is not merely listened to patiently, but is absolutely enjoyed. After all it may be

questioned whether the sensation drama can boast anything more really exciting than the scenes of the battle of Bosworth Field as they are now represented at Drury Lane. Mr. Barry Sullivan's exertions in the part of *Richard* were rewarded with extraordinary applause. The actor wisely adhered to the conventional method of rendering the character, for it clearly can be worth no one's while to attempt a new reading of Cibber's hero, and certainly spared himself in no way. His voice is a little deficient in compass, and his declamation is apt consequently to become somewhat monotonous, but upon the whole he supports the part heroically. Hoarseness in the last act must have befallen all Richards time out of mind, for the part is terribly taxing to the lungs, and in the same way some degree of mouthing and ranting can hardly ever have been wholly dispensed with. *Richard* is one of those thorough-going villains of the theatre, the audacious frankness of whose wickedness, their fertility of resource, and the short work they make of their opponents, until justice overtakes them quite in the last scene, somehow invariably establish friendly relations between them and the audience. All his long list of crimes notwithstanding, "the bloody and devouring boar" always succeeds in investing himself with a kind of popularity—possibly being generally viewed as a "self-made" man. Mr. Sullivan fairly deserved all the applause he obtained.

XIII.

"THE MAN OF THE WORLD."

[Drury Lane Theatre.—March 1868.]

So long as Mr. Phelps is able and willing to sustain the arduous character of *Sir Pertinax McSycophant*, Macklin's comedy of "The Man of the World" will assuredly keep its place in the repertory of the theatre and retain power to attract an audience. The work is of an old-fashioned kind enough, tedious in many of its scenes, slight in story, and depicting characters and incidents considerably removed

from the sympathies if not from the comprehension of the modern public; yet in the hands of a competent actor the part of *Sir Pertinax*--so strongly is it drawn, so elaborately wrought, and so forcibly coloured--is found still to arrest attention and to awaken interest. Mr. Phelps has made *Sir Pertinax* his own. No actor now upon the stage has even ventured to compete with him in the character, and it may be said that Mr. Phelps is seen to more advantage in *Sir Pertinax* than in any other of his numerous histrionic assumptions, tragic or comic.

"The Man of the World" was first played in England at Covent Garden in 1781, having previously, as a three-act comedy called "The True-born Scotchman," been represented at the Crow-street Theatre, Dublin, in 1772. Certain political allusions in the play excited the apprehension of the Lord Chamberlain, and some difficulty was experienced, and modification of the work in some respects became necessary, before it could be licensed for performance. Although repeated but a few times during its first season, the comedy was received with much favour. Macklin himself appeared as *Sir Pertinax*, and was said to have been ninety years of age at the time. Yet ten years later he was to be found representing the same character. The veteran's memory by this time had become defective, however, and he was occasionally compelled to ask the indulgence of the audience on account of his imperfect acquaintance with his part. Altogether, this could hardly have been a matter for much surprise.

Sir Pertinax became subsequently one of the most admired characters of George Frederick Cooke, and was also represented occasionally by Fawcett, Young, Edmund Kean, and other actors, with more or less success. The other characters in the comedy are of a subordinate kind, and afford few opportunities to the performers for the display of their ability. Indeed the interest of the work centres in *Sir Pertinax*, and the plot is merely a vehicle for the thorough development of the peculiarities of this one character. All the five acts are passed in the drawing-room of the Scotchman's country house without a single change of scene, and, with the exception of the first act, in which he does not appear, he rarely quits the stage for a

moment throughout the play. The story deals with his intricate scheming to secure a wealthy wife for his son, and the progress and ultimate discomfiture of his machinations. It is in the course of his endeavours to force his own opinions upon his heir that the most famous scene in the comedy occurs, and he enters upon a narrative of his past life and a disclosure of the system of hypocrisy and servility by which he has obtained success. In his utter unconsciousness of his own meanness, in his faith in his system as a thing against which no reasonable objection can be urged, in his determination to stand by it and justify it at all points, consist the humours of the character. His description of his winning a rich wife from the Tabernacle in Moorfields is so striking in itself, and is so forcibly delivered by Mr. Phelps, that it fairly carried away the house; nor did the rage and indignation which find such violent expression upon the downfall of his plans fail to excite the audience in a similar degree. The comedy is throughout very well written, and its speeches and dialogue especially manifest that regard for antithesis and carefully balanced sentences which found such fervent admiration among the writers of the last century.

Mr. Phelps has fairly mastered the difficulties of Scottish dialect—in his delivery of which Cooke was said to have been deficient—and plays *Sir Pertinax* with extraordinary animation and energy. It may be said, perhaps, that his early scenes are wanting somewhat in North British calmness and composure. He is so feverishly anxious for the success of his schemes that he betrays some want of confidence in the value of his calculations. A kind of hectic earnestness, however, is inseparable from the actor's manner, and this stands him in good stead further on in the play. If he begins as a kind of Scottish *Sir Anthony Absolute*, he soon develops into the genuine *Sir Pertinax* of the author's conception. Moreover, Mr. Phelps's peculiar distinctness of utterance, which is apt to have an over-laboured effect in certain characters, is of real advantage in *Sir Pertinax*. The slurred articulation of younger players, joined to the indispensable dialect of the part, would render many of the speeches wholly unintelligible to Southern ears. But Mr. Phelps's studied declamatory method of speech removes

all danger on this score. Altogether, the actor achieved a triumph, which his exertions honestly deserved. Mr. Barrett and Mr. Edmund Phelps were respectable as *Lord Lumbercourt* and *Mr. Egerton*, and Mr. Charles Warner earned applause as *Mr. Sidney*, the clergyman.

XIV.

"A HERO OF ROMANCE."

[Haymarket Theatre.—March 1868.]

"*Le Roman d'un Jeune Homme Pauvre*," by M. Octave Feuillet, which furnished Mr. Oxenford with the subject of his drama of "*Ivy Hall*," produced at the Princess's Theatre in 1859, has now been newly adapted to the English stage by Dr. Westland Marston, and appears under the title of "*A Hero of Romance*."

The story is of that high-flown, sentimental character which finds much favour in the eyes of a French audience, but is somewhat at variance with the more practical and prosaic views of the British public. Translation after the ordinary method, therefore, preserving all the original scenes and incidents, and merely substituting English for French names, would hardly have met the difficulties of the case. Mr. Oxenford sought to relieve the play from too trying a comparison with the conditions of modern life by antedating the events of the story, and presuming these to have occurred towards the close of the last century. Playgoers who are fully convinced that so far as they are concerned the days of chivalry and romance are over, will yet readily credit that in a period removed from their own personal experience there actually flourished persons capable of much sentiment and self-sacrifice. To "*Ivy Hall*," therefore, an old English character was assigned. The story was invested with a sort of Sir Charles Grandison flavour. National melodies of ancient date were played between the acts of the play, and some pretty pictures of old English country life in hall and park

were provided. In spite, however, of the pains taken with its production, "Ivy Hall" was but languidly received, and after some few representations was withdrawn from the theatre.

Dr. Marston has made less important changes in the play, though he has rewritten and rearranged certain of its scenes. The period is supposed to be of modern date, but the characters retain their original nationality. The hero is called *Victor Marquis de Tourville*, and the audience are probably expected to account for the extreme sentimentality of his utterances and proceedings by the fact that he is a foreigner, and not, therefore, to be judged by English notions of what is reasonable and expedient. The play is written with Dr. Marston's usual ability and carefulness of style, and the story is interesting enough of its kind, although certainly very slight in subject in proportion to the time occupied in its development. "A Hero of Romance" is in five acts, with a prefatory and purely unnecessary scene by way of a prologue. The reception of the play was, upon the whole, favourable, although the patience of the audience was somewhat tried by certain of the incidents, and real enthusiasm was excited upon only one occasion. This was, of course, the famous scene in the third act, where *Victor* and *Blanche* are accidentally locked up together in the ruined Tower of Elfen. The lady charges her lover with a design upon her honour, and with having therefore prearranged her detention in the ruins. To vindicate himself, Victor, at the risk of breaking his neck, leaps down from the tower and obtains assistance. The applause with which this scene was greeted was perhaps due rather to Mr. Sothern's display of agility than to any other consideration. An English lover would probably have held that the exigencies of the case would have been sufficiently met by his simply "dropping" from the tower; but the suicidal-looking, head-long plunge in which Mr. Sothern indulges is perhaps more in keeping with his view of the excitable French gentleman he is personating, and moreover "headers" are well-established means of moving an audience, and are sources of popularity which must not be undervalued. The situation, however, is really dramatic, and in that respect contrasts

remarkably with the other incidents of the drama. Such favour as M. Feuillet's work may enjoy on the English stage will be probably due to this one scene in the ruins of Elfen. Otherwise the success of the drama in Paris will hardly find adequate reflection in this country.

Although the drama numbers some twenty characters, but few of these are of real importance, or assist in any marked degree in the unfolding and progress of the story. The hero is of course rather a showy part, and in such wise no doubt enables Mr. Sothern to distinguish himself in that line of sentimental impersonation to which, in preference to the efforts of eccentric comedy which first brought him fame, he now seems disposed to adhere. Still the character is without real subtlety, and furnishes few opportunities for genuine artistic acting. Easy and natural in the level speeches of the part, Mr. Sothern becomes laboriously artificial when called upon to deliver more exalted passages. His declamation has a stilted stagey tone about it, contrasting curiously with the success of his colloquial manner. He is apt to overact his emotional scenes, and when he would be particularly fervid assumes an air of bombast and is more noisy than really impressive. The unconsciousness of his usual style abandons him when he approaches the graver incidents of the play. It may be doubted whether the actor is destined to permanent success in characters of "juvenile tragedy," to adopt the phraseology of the theatre. Still Mr. Sothern is invariably careful, and commends himself to the regard of an audience by his evident anxiety to do all possible justice to the part in which he appears. *Blanche*, the heroine of the drama, is a supercilious and rather silly lady, who fails to awaken much interest, but Miss Robertson sustains the part with ability.

"THE RIVALS."

[Queen's Theatre.—July 1868.]

ON the occasion of the benefit of Mrs. Wigan the comedy of "The Rivals" has been revived—"for one night only."

Mr. Wigan has long been acknowledged as one of the most versatile and accomplished actors upon the English stage—one of the very few of our players, indeed, distinctly entitled to take rank as an artist. Still, his assumption of such a character as *Sir Anthony Absolute* was in the nature of an experiment, upon the favourable issue of which his most staunch admirers could hardly rely with any sort of confidence. That he might acquit himself creditably as *Captain Absolute*, or as *Faulkland*, or as *Sir Lucius O'Trigger*, few who had studied the actor's achievements at all would be disposed to dispute. But *Sir Anthony* was a character very wide of Mr. Wigan's line of acting, varied and divergent as that line has always been. As *Sir Paul Pagoda*, in the little comedy of "The Bengal Tiger," he had shown great command of a sort of valetudinarian irascibility which is essential to the part; but *Sir Anthony's* sturdy, sustained ardour and anger of temperament were different matters. To personate successfully the wrathful fathers of the comedies of the last century peculiar constitutional gifts and a special histrionic training seemed indispensable. As a rule, the actor who obtained success in characters of this class played nothing else; to the end of his days he remained the "stock" and established elderly gentleman of the theatre. He began life as an "old man," to adopt the professional classification, and rose through farce and burletta until the dignities of the advanced age of high comedy were fairly and securely his. Mr. Wigan has served no theatrical apprenticeship of this kind, however. His fame has been acquired by his efforts in a very miscellaneous list of what are called character parts. Beyond his undoubted possession of talent of a multiform sort, there was no evi-

dence to suggest that he could acquit himself satisfactorily in such a part as *Sir Anthony Absolute*. Yet upon the whole Mr. Wigan's *Sir Anthony* may be said to have greatly pleased his audience, and to have been a very genuine success.

The actor had taken exceeding pains with the part. His face had been carefully "made up," and every detail of his dress and deportment elaborately studied. He looked, indeed, like one of those figures of past life which Meissonnier delights to portray in his cabinet pictures. He had the stern, dark brows, the high suffused colour, the mobile twitching facial muscles of the thoroughly and constitutionally choleric man. There was something of the stiffness of age in his gait, yet in his manner of addressing the ladies of the comedy there was a formal obsequious politeness which it was evident had become a little old-fashioned from the point of view of the younger of the dramatis personæ. There had been degeneration in the airs of gentlemen since *Sir Anthony's* adolescence. He seemed to feel with Cibber that there was the difference between "the stately mien of a peacock" and the "pertness of a lapwing," marking the decline of manners from those obtaining in his youth to those prevalent among the young men of his later years. Perhaps Mr. Wigan's best scene was the interview with *Captain Absolute* in the second act, in which the marriage is proposed and stormily discussed. This was acted with finished force and effect, and quite deserved the repeated rounds of applause it obtained. In *Sir Anthony's* merrier scenes the unctuous chuckling manner, for which Mr. Farren was so celebrated, in dilating upon the charms of *Miss Lydia Languish*, was wanting; but still the humour and excitability of the character were well sustained. The impersonation was at no time deficient in symmetry and consistency, although old playgoers may possibly still prefer the conventional treatment of the part to Mr. Wigan's less vehement but consummately artistic method of performance.

Mrs. Wigan, admirably costumed, gave due effect to the peculiarities of *Mrs. Malaprop*. The lady's "nice derangement of epitaphs" can hardly have been delivered more naturally, or with a completer air of unconsciousness. The humours of *Bob Acres* were quite safe in the hands of

Mr. Toole, who indeed showed himself to be a genuine comedian in his commendable abstinence from a farcical rendering of the character. Mr. Irving was a respectable *Faulkland*. The representatives of *Julia* and *Lydia* were somewhat wanting in the "quality" air which should distinguish young ladies of fashion of the last century. But, upon the whole, the comedy was fairly played, and adequately placed upon the stage—some anachronisms and eccentricities of dress being allowed for.

It may be received as proof, if proof were needed, of the vitality of genuine wit and humour, that "The Rivals" was as much enjoyed and laughed over by the audience as though it were quite a new work, and its best passages had not become household words. Yet the comedy, written when its author was but twenty-three, first saw the foot-lights so far back as 1775. It came as a sort of compensation to the theatrical world for the loss it was that year to sustain; 1775 saw Garrick's retirement from the stage. We may note that the original "tag" is now omitted; probably it has not been given in its integrity for many years. That Sheridan should have closed a brilliant work with so tiresome and inappropriate a speech is matter for wonder. The final lines are appended for the study of the curious:—"When hearts deserving happiness would unite their fortunes, Virtue would crown them with an unfading garland of modest, hurtless flowers; but ill-judging Passion will force the gaudier rose into the wreath, whose thorn offends them when its leaves are dropped!" The passage is very suggestive of *Joseph Surface*.

XVI.

"ALARCOS."

[Astley's Theatre.—July 29, 1868.]

"THE Tragedy of Count Alarcos," by the author of "Vivian Grey," was first published in 1839. A few years before its appearance, Mr. Disraeli, in his "Runnymede Letters," addressing himself to Lord John Russell, had

written :—"When you returned from Spain, the solitary life of travel, and the inspiration of a romantic country, acting upon your ambition, had persuaded you that you were a great poet ; your intellect in consequence produced the feeblest tragedy in our language." The taunt was not the offspring of political animosity merely ; it was due in a measure to the jealousy of a rival aspirant for poetic honours. Mr. Disraeli had also enjoyed solitary travel in the inspiring regions of Spain, had also conceived himself to be a poet, and had laid out the ground-plan of a tragedy. "Years have flown away," he writes in his prefatory dedication of "Alarcos" to Lord Francis Egerton, "since, rambling in the sierras of Andalusia, beneath the clear light of a Spanish moon, and freshened by the sea breeze that had wandered up a river from the coast, I first listened to the chant of that strange and terrible tale [the Count Alarcos]. It seemed to me rife with all the materials of the tragic drama, and I planned, as I rode along, the scenes and characters of which it seemed to me susceptible." Mr. Disraeli's evening ride in the sierras of Andalusia as he meditated upon his tragedy should form a fitting subject for the display of an historical painter's genius. "*That*," he proceeds, "was the season of life when the heart is quick with emotion and the brain with creative fire ; when the eye is haunted with beautiful sights and the ear with sweet sounds ; when we live in reveries of magnificent performance, and the future seems only a perennial flow of poetic invention. Dreams of fantastic youth ! Amid the stern realities of existence I have unexpectedly achieved a long-lost purpose." The "stern realities" were referable, probably to Mr. Disraeli's ill-success in the House of Commons, which he had entered in 1837 as member for Maidstone.

Thirty years ago it was Mr. Disraeli's humour to write flowery and pretentious prefaces. For his least estimable books he claimed, in terms sufficiently arrogant, the most ambitious aims. Thus "The Wondrous Tale of Alroy" was, to set the world right in its notions of poetry ; the "Revolutionary Epick" was "to teach wisdom both to monarchs and to multitudes ;" "Alarcos" had for its design "the revival of English tragedy." The theory of the drama's

decline was, he admitted, plausible enough. "But what theory was ever true?" he demanded. "And who can deny that a fine play, finely performed, is among the noblest productions of art? This age denounced as anti-poetical seems to me full of poetry, for it is full of passion." "Alarcos," however, did not revive English tragedy. It did not find its way to the English stage. In fact, it did nothing, but fall rather flatly upon the reading public of the period. The author may console himself that this was but another instance of his having, to employ his own figure, poured water upon sand from a goblet since discovered to be golden. Perhaps, however, "parcel-gilt" better describes the vessel in question.

The tragedy is founded upon the old thirteenth-century ballad of the "Conde Alarcos," which Bouterwek describes as "among the best to which knight-errantry has given birth," and of which admirable English versions have been published by Mr. Lockhart and Sir John Bowring. In the original the Infanta Solisa, secretly betrothed to the Count Alarcos, has been dishonoured and abandoned by him. The king becomes acquainted with his daughter's wrongs after Alarcos has become the husband of another woman. The king requires of Alarcos the death of his countess, as the only satisfaction that can be rendered to the outraged honour of the royal family. Alarcos, in compliance with his sovereign's demand, bids his wife prepare for death. Forgiving her murderer, she predicts that within thirty days the king and his daughter will be summoned before the tribunal of heaven. Alarcos strangles her. In the conclusion of the ballad the fulfilment of the countess's prediction is briefly related. On the twelfth day the princess died, on the twentieth the king, and on the thirtieth Alarcos himself expired.

In Mr. Disraeli's tragedy the scene is laid at Burgos. There is no imputation upon the honour of the Infanta. Alarcos, loving and loved by her, and "the brightest knight that ever waved a lance in old Castille," has been subjected to the amorous persecution of the Queen Mother, who is designated as a "lewd she-wolf," and has for some time abandoned the Court in consequence. Upon the Queen's death he reappears at Burgos. Meanwhile he has married:—

As men do oft from very wantonness ;
To tamper with a destiny that's cross,
To spite my fate, to put the seal upon
A balked career, in high and proud defiance
Of hopes that yet might mock me, to beat down
False expectation and its damned lures,
And fix a bar betwixt me and defeat.

But his love for Solisa is not subdued. "Such passions are eternity," he says. He is weary, and would be rid of his wife ; he is indifferent to the children she has brought him. He compels her to listen to the addresses of a lover, who, it is curious to note, is called the Count Sidonia ; but she is incapable of infidelity. The king suggests to him the murder of the countess. In addition to his passion for Solisa, tempting him to the crime, there is, he confesses, "a twin-born lure, cradled with love—ambition !" He persuades a faithful Moorish servant to undertake the deed. The Moor relents, however, at the last moment, and commits suicide. Thereupon Alarcos is driven to accomplish the crime himself. Here follows the stage direction :—
"Alarcos moves hastily to the chamber, which he enters. The stage for some seconds is empty—a shriek is then heard. Alarcos reappears very pale and slowly advances to the front of the stage. "'Tis over, and I live !" During the commission of the murder a storm rages. Says a man-at-arms :—

The lightnings play
Upon our turrets that no human step
Can keep the watch. Each forked flash seems missioned
To scath our roof, and the whole platform flows
With a blue sea of flame !

The midnight bell sounds. The courtiers enter and announce the death of the princess :—

A bolt came winged from the startling blue of heaven
And struck the Infanta. . . .
She fell a blighted corpse.

Says Alarcos :—

There's a God of vengeance. . . .
The King o'erwhelmed. Poor man !

Go, tell him, sirs, the Count Alarcos lived
To find a hell on earth. Yet thus he sought
A deeper and a darker.

Thereupon he stabs himself, and the curtain falls.

Notwithstanding the lofty objects with which it was conceived, "Alarcos" does not greatly differ from many other works of its class, which have quickly been forgotten. Mr. Disraeli seems to have written, though it may be unconsciously, with the tragedies of the Rev. Mr. Maturin and of "Monk" Lewis present in his mind. Yet that he was possessed of a sense of the value of dramatic situation and of stage effect cannot be denied. Moreover, it is plain that he perceived the importance of spectacle, and placed reliance upon the aid of the scene-painter and the ballet-master. In the third act of the play the audience are introduced to the "Interior of the Cathedral of Burgos. The high altar illuminated: in the distance various chapels lighted, and in each of which mass is celebrating: in all directions groups of kneeling worshippers. Before the high altar, the Prior of Burgos officiates attended by his sacerdotal retinue. In the front of the stage, opposite to the audience, a confessional. The chanting of a solemn mass commences," &c. &c. Surely this scene may be regarded as a sort of commission to the late David Roberts. In other portions of the tragedy we are taken to "a Posada frequented by bravos, in an obscure quarter of Burgos,"—with picturesque groups of ruffians drinking, gambling, and playing on the mandoline—while gipsy girls dance in front; and to "an illuminated hall in the royal palace of Burgos," with a throng of dancing courtiers in the background. Further concessions to the taste of the "groundlings" may be found in a "procession with lighted torches attending the Infanta from mass," in the final storm, and in a broadsword combat in which Alarcos repels the attack of five bravos. Mr. Disraeli's attempt to revive English tragedy was manifestly something in the light of a compromise with modern melodrama.

Mr. Disraeli's opinion of Lord Russell's "Don Carlos" has been stated. Lord Russell's opinion of Mr. Disraeli's "Alarcos" has not, we believe, been given to the world. If the elder Premier ever longed vengefully that his political

enemy should write a book, his wish has been gratified. The public can choose for itself which it prefers of these two tragedies by eminent statesmen.

The production of "Alarcos" at Astley's attracted a large audience. The performance, however, was of a very unsatisfactory kind, and upon the fall of the curtain manifestations of discontent and condemnation were not wanting.

If "Alarcos" had been brought upon the stage of one of the leading theatres some thirty years ago, about the date of the first publication of the work, it may be that the experiment would have been attended with a fair show of success. Mr. Macready, for instance, might have found opportunities for histrionic display in the part of the hero; and, supported by an efficient company, with an actress of some power and intelligence representing the *Princess Solisa*, with due regard for stage arrangement, and liberal aid from the costumier and scene painter, the tragedy might have secured a measure of vitality and a respectable share of public favour. Not that the literary merits of the work are very remarkable; certainly it does not rise above the average worth of the five-act plays, of which at one time there was wont to be such very abundant production. But genuine ability and effort on the part of the performers can render surprising service to any sort of play. One has only to turn to the long list of dramas which the exertions of Mrs. Siddons, of the Kembles, of Edmund Kean, and others, succeeded in establishing for a prolonged period in the repertory of the theatre, to be convinced of the extraordinary power of the players in this respect. Mrs. Siddons, following Mrs. Crawford in the part of *Lady Randolph*, won the favour of the town for the dreary play of "Douglas;" Kemble's *Penruddock* secured success for the ponderous comedy of "The Wheel of Fortune;" while Kean's genius gave light and life to Maturin's grim tragedy of "Bertram." In the same way a really fine actor might have obtained toleration and something more for Mr. Disraeli's "Alarcos," especially as the play is not absolutely without passages of genuine dramatic value. The story is indeed an impressive one, and though it has been dealt with by the dramatist in no very ingenious or felicitous manner, it has not been possible

for him to deprive it wholly of its legitimate effect. From an actor's point of view *Alarcos* is a showy kind of part, with plenty to say and to do in it, and a sufficiency of those opportunities for personal parade which are so fondly regarded by the players. Of scope for subtlety of representation there is none in the character, which is strictly of a conventional commonplace pattern; yet it is amply provided with the set speeches, and figures prominently in the stirring situations, which in the theatre make applause and admiration matters of certainty. Nor are the other characters in the drama such as in competent hands would wholly fail in winning the attention of the audience. Condensation and excision would no doubt have been necessary if only out of deference to the demands of "stop-watch" criticism. Moreover, dramatists for the most part are prone to be profuse, and Mr. Disraeli is constitutionally flowery and fluent to redundancy. With these conditions observed, the players competent, the stage fittings adequate, and the commonest care evinced in setting the play before the public, "*Alarcos*" might not have achieved a very resplendent triumph, it is true, but a respectful reception of the play could hardly have been avoided.

At Astley's it is plain the salient idea of the management has been to ascertain, with an eye to its own interests, how far the appearance of the Prime Minister's name in the playbills had power to fill the theatre. "*Alarcos*" was simply "pitchforked" on to the stage. As Douglas Jerrold wrote once in reference to one of his own works, "it was drugged, and stabbed, and hit about the head, as only some players *can* hit a play—hard and remorselessly." Many of the actors were so unskilled in their profession as to be wholly inaudible, while the majority of those who could be heard were but imperfectly acquainted with the words of their parts and talked nonsense to make out their scenes, as builders fill cavities by shooting in rubbish. Miss Agnes Cameron, who was advertised as the "directress" of the theatre and an actress of American fame, proved to be no actress at all. So courageous an exhibition of incapacity can hardly ever have been seen in a London theatre. The stage management was that of a strolling company in a barn. A street scene was made to do duty for the interior

of the Cathedral of Burgos, and the *Prior of Burgos* was actually compelled to receive the confession of a penitent in that public situation, surrounded by a dozen supernumeraries looking on and listening. The "sensational adaptation" promised in the advertisements was limited to the occasional introduction of that orchestral twittering and trembling usually associated with melodrama, and to the interpolation of some very strange speeches in the last scene, which deferred for some time the catastrophe, and rendered it absolutely ludicrous when at last it was arrived at. The only exception that can be made in the general condemnation of the representation must be in favour of Mr. Charles Verner, who sustained the part of *Alarcos*. Mr. Verner appears to be an actor of some experience who has accepted Mr. Phelps as his exemplar, and is careful to follow all the peculiarities of manner of that performer, even to imitating that superabundant working of the eyebrows, shrugging of the shoulders, and heaving of the chest which invariably mark his exertions in tragedy. Still Mr. Verner had clearly taken some pains with his part, and laboured zealously to render it as effective as he could. He is not without stage adroitness, though he adheres too closely to theatrical tradition.

The audience comported themselves with most commendable patience, applauding when they could with any sort of conscience, laughing now and then, and hissing a little at the fall of the curtain. A call was raised for the author, but this compliment was understood to be of rather an ironical kind. Mr. Disraeli was not present, or he would surely have repented the fatal good nature with which he had given his "kind permission" to the performance of his tragedy, and indirectly countenanced the catchpenny speculation of the management of Astley's.

XVII.

"THE CONQUEST OF MAGDALA."

[Astley's Theatre.—September 1868.]

UPON the stage which has seen mimic representations of the battle of Waterloo and the wars in China, India, and the Crimea, the latest achievements of British valour have now been honoured with dramatic illustration. There has been produced at Astley's Theatre "an entirely original, historical, grand naval and military spectacular drama, in four parts, replete with military evolutions, processions, dances, pageants, combats," &c. The new work is entitled "The Conquest of Magdala and the Fall of Theodore," and proceeds, we believe, from the pen of Mr. Fox Cooper, the stage manager of Astley's.

On a sort of fly-leaf to the playbill the author informs us that, with the aid of a prologue to his drama, he has sought to provide an intelligible motive for the cruelty of *Theodore* "by supplying the tyrant with the additional excuse of the prescription of his ancestors." With this view the audience are made acquainted with certain facts in connection with the early history of Abyssinia which, indubitably, are not generally known. To find justification for *Theodore* the dramatist looks back a long way through the years. The earlier incidents of the play are supposed to have happened exactly two centuries ago. A party of comic Puritans, consisting of *Jedediah Snuffleton*, *Timothy Flower-top*, and his wife, are discovered traversing the mountain defiles of Abyssinia. They enter riding upon donkeys, much as though they were at Margate, and their period was of to-day. Their language and manners, moreover, are distinctly marked by a cockney humour of quite modern date. The travellers are made captives by a fierce Mahometan chief named *Abdul*, who forthwith orders them to be "burnt, impaled, and flayed alive." Happily they are spared this cruel and compound doom by the arrival of a body of British troops, who are described as "the soldiers of

Lord Peterborough." The soldiers engage the natives and rescue the prisoners. In the conflict the son of *Abdul*, named *Rasselas* (by way of compliment to Dr. Johnson, we presume), receives his death-wound. Over the body of *Rasselas*, *Abdul* and his followers vow eternal vengeance against the British wherever and whenever they may be found. With the retirement of the soldiers of *Lord Peterborough*, who, it may be noted, wear uniforms of George the Second's time, and are led by an officer in the costume of *Don Cæsar de Bazan*, the prologue terminates.

The play proper introduces us to Abyssinia at the present date. The scenery is professedly painted from drawings made on the spot. Yet "the gardens and kiosk" of *Theodore* strangely resemble a view of the abode of the Khan of Tartary pertaining of right to the familiar drama of "Mazeppa." The costumes demonstrate how severely the wardrobe of the theatre has been taxed by the production of this drama. The striped shirts of Irish peasants, such as appear in the "Colleen Bawn," the robes and plumes and leopard skins of the Peruvians who fought against *Pizarro*, even the stars and spangles of the clowns who whilom used to tumble in the arena of the Astley's of yesterday, would seem to have been made available by the chieftains and people of *Theodore*. The *King* is a conventional stage tyrant, lauding himself and defaming his prisoners and his foes in ponderous bass tones. The *Queen* is lachrymose and compassionate. In compliance with her request the *King* spares for a term his captives, and, to relieve her sorrows and amuse himself and the audience, orders the performance of a troop of ballet girls, who, it is stated, have lately come to him from Paris.

The third part of the drama brings us to the arrival of the British army in Annesley Bay. Here we have a scene of great animation, which afforded unbounded pleasure to the audience. A strong body of real Grenadier Guards parade the stage, in company with horse artillerymen and a few privates of some regiment of very irregular Indian cavalry. The corps de ballet now represents the naval brigade, and performs a most elaborate hornpipe. To show that nothing has been forgotten a mule is introduced, or what looks like a mule, until the creature turns its head

and reveals itself a pony in disguise, with long artificial brown paper ears fixed outside its natural ones.

The entrance of *Sir Robert Napier* was, of course, the signal for a storm of applause, due less, perhaps, to the merits of the actor than to the eminence of the character he personated. The stage *Sir Robert* appeared to be somewhat insecure in his saddle, and considerably inconvenienced by the fact that his jack-boots were many sizes too large for him. In other respects the British commander was satisfactorily represented. His speech to his troops was ably delivered, allowing for the difficulties of oratory on horseback, especially when your charger is afflicted with severe cough, and is tormented by a crazy anxiety to turn round and round.

In the invading army are of course to be found those farcical characters without which no "hippo-drama" would be complete. *Timothy Scroggins* is a private in the 4th Foot, whose humour it is to be for ever losing his tunic in his search after a British public-house in the wilds of Abyssinia. *Scroggins* is accompanied by one *Paddy Shannon*, an Irish corporal in the artillery, who is obviously performed by the actor who in the prologue had appeared as the ferocious chieftain *Abdul*. In relation to this extraordinary metempsychosis the dramatist furnishes us with no sort of explanation. *Scroggins* and *Shannon* tried hard to be funny, but were not well supplied with opportunities of distinguishing themselves in that respect. Their encounter with a gorilla, however, a harmless animal, not given, it may be remarked, to beating its breast or emitting sounds of any peculiar portent, sufficiently entertained the gallery.

In the concluding part of the drama the arms of *Theodore* and England are brought into collision, and Magdala is stormed and captured. The *King* is slain in single combat with *Lieutenant Harcourt*, theretofore one of his captives—a poetically just conclusion, rather due to the invention of the playwright than strictly founded upon historical fact. Midst peals of musketry, clouds of smoke, and much glow of coloured fires, the curtain falls, and a choked and blinded and deafened audience award unmeasured applause to the new production. The success of the play was com-

plete. But Mr. Cooper should be adjured to remember Ducrow's counsel—"cut the *dialect* and get to the hosses"—a dictum worthy of the regard of the most advanced dramatists, and of being inscribed in letters of gold above the proscenium of all our theatres. Mr. Cooper has, apparently, but little literary faculty; and much of his flat and foolish dialogue might be suppressed with exceeding benefit to his play. Everything is permitted in an Astley's drama except the privilege of being dull. That pertains to more pretentious establishments, and is not likely to become forfeit from disuse.

XVIII.

"KING O' SCOTS."

[Drury Lane Theatre.—October 1868.]

SIR WALTER SCOTT at one time complained that he had been made a dramatist whether he would or not. "I believe," he continued, laughingly, "my muse would be *Terry*-fied into treading the stage even if I should write a sermon." Each Waverley novel as it issued from the press was pounced upon by Terry, Dimond, Dibdin, Pocock, or some other popular dramatist of the period, and forthwith converted to the uses of the theatre. The managers struggled to be first in the field with their adaptations. Dibdin, it was understood, could produce a dramatic version of any given novel in something under eight-and-forty hours after its publication; and his competitors did not require much more time in the concoction of their plays on the same subject. Yet of the many dramas thus presented to the world, although they enjoyed great success on their first production—for it would seem to have been a point of duty with the readers of Scott to witness the dramatic illustration of his stories—few have secured any permanent place in the theatrical repertory. Even "Rob Roy" and "Guy Mannering," which still obtain occasional representation, have probably existed less on account of

their inherent dramatic merits than by reason of their operatic form and the numerous Scottish melodies imported into them. Some seasons back Mr. Fechter produced "The Bride of Lammermoor," and Mrs. Boucicault, a short time since, appeared with credit in "The Heart of Midlothian;" but these were newly arranged dramas differing greatly from the stage versions of the novels current in Scott's time. What modern playgoer, we may ask, can boast acquaintance with dramas founded on "The Antiquary," "Ivanhoe," "The Abbot," "Kenilworth," "The Pirate," "Woodstock," "Peveril of the Peak," &c.? Yet all these works found their way to the stage, and in some instances several versions of the same story were submitted to the consideration of the theatrical public.

The "Fortunes of Nigel," as a play, was first produced at the Surrey Theatre in the summer of 1822. The dramatist was Mr. Ball, subsequently more famous as Mr. Fitzball, who completed the task of adaptation in a week. The play enjoyed a successful run of ninety-six nights. A second version, by Pocock, called "Nigel; or, the Crown Jewels," was produced at Covent Garden some months later, but, although supported by the *King James* of Bartley, the *Dalgarno* of Charles Kemble, and the *Margaret Ramsay* of Miss Foote, and aided by some finely painted views of old London, the play failed to please, securing but six representations. A third adaptation, by Terry, in which Liston was to have appeared as the *King*, and Miss Stephens as *Margaret*, was rehearsed at Drury Lane, but in consequence of the ill-success of Pocock's play, was prudently withdrawn from the theatre, and never underwent the risk of performance.

Playgoers of the present time have not the *Waverley Novels* so freshly in their remembrance as the public of fifty years ago, when it was not so necessary to produce a coherent drama as to huddle upon the stage the most striking scenes of the story last published, the audience supplying from recollection the play's shortcomings in the matter of intelligibility. It has therefore been incumbent upon Mr. Halliday, the latest adapter of "The Fortunes of Nigel," to aim less at fidelity to Scott than at the provision of a drama which should be in itself, and without reference to

its original, consistent and comprehensible. Upon the whole, although certain of his modifications may be open to grave question, the dramatist has fairly succeeded in his design, while several scenes of his play are ingeniously contrived. The "King o' Scots," as the new production is entitled, is, indeed, a picturesque and stirring melodrama, with merits sufficient to have warranted a disregard for such sensational expedients as *Nigel's* "leap for life" at the close of the first act, and the spectacle of *Dalgarno's* dead body floating down the river by lime-light in the opening scene of the third act. The play has been most liberally "mounted" by the management. Considered simply as a spectacle, it may vie with any productions of that class seen in London of late years. Mr. Beverly has provided a series of admirable "backgrounds;" his views of Fleet Street in the time of James I., of Whitefriars, of Greenwich Park, and of Old London Bridge, are most admirable specimens of scene painting. The costumes are handsome, and for the most part appropriate, although the modern-looking barrister, who represents, we presume, the Templar element in the riot of the apprentices in the first scene, is a decided blot upon an otherwise well-arranged picture. Most animated crowds occupy the stage throughout the drama; the revels in Alsatia and the hunt in Greenwich Park (with real hounds and horses, greatly to the delight of the gallery) being triumphs of stage management, considered from the "realistic" point of view now so much in favour. These special attractions would of course have insured the success of the play, the reception of which was, indeed, from the first, of a most enthusiastic kind. Yet the "King o' Scots" has this in addition to be said for it: that it provides opportunities for very good acting on the part of Mr. Phelps, who sustains two characters—*James the First* and *Trapbois the Miser*. Mr. Phelps's command over the Scottish accent has been frequently exhibited in his performance of *Sir Pertinax McSycophant*; and, during his management of Sadler's Wells, we believe, he appeared in a play by the Rev. Mr. White, of which a personation of *James the First* was a peculiar feature. As a tragedian Mr. Phelps has been censured for "lacing the buskin too tight," to employ the

language of critics of the last century ; but as a delineator of marked character of a humorous kind he is without an equal on the stage. His *James the First* closely follows Sir Walter's portraiture of the king. The unsteady gait, the restless hands, the mien now pedantically stiff and now marked by most unroyal looseness and levity, are most faithfully rendered. The actor's success in the part was indisputable, while his *Trapbois* was a performance of even greater artistic distinction, although it won, perhaps, less applause from the audience. So finished and forcible a picture of senile imbecility has seldom been seen on the modern stage. Mr. Phelps's histrionic manner is of a sufficiently pronounced kind, yet this seemed hardly traceable in his performance of the Alsatian miser, so completely did the actor merge his identity and become absorbed in the character he represented. For picturesqueness of appearance and elaboration of treatment Mr. Phelps's *Trapbois* may be placed beside his *Justice Shallow*—the two characters being, of course, widely different in their nature—and higher praise can hardly be awarded to his achievement. Why the orchestra should always follow every entrance and action of the miser by a noisy performance of the old drinking song of "Down among the dead men" is among the many mysteries of musical accompaniment for which our theatres are becoming remarkable.

XIX.

"THE RIGHTFUL HEIR."

[Lyceum Theatre.—October 1868.]

LORD LYTTON'S "new romantic play in five acts and eight tableaux," is not entirely new to the stage. It is confessedly founded on a former work, "The Sea Captain," with many additions and much alteration of the original materials.

"The Sea Captain" was Lord Lytton's fourth dramatic essay. His first play, "The Duchess de la Vallière," produced in 1836, met with little success, and was withdrawn

after some half-dozen representations. As he himself observed in a speech delivered at Edinburgh ten or twelve years ago, "My first poetry was thought detestable, and my first play very nearly escaped being damned." In 1838 he gave to the world the popular "Lady of Lyons, or Love and Pride," certainly the most successful five-act play of modern times, and in the following year was first performed his historical drama of "Richelieu," the reception of which was of a very favourable kind. The year 1839 saw also the production of "The Sea Captain" at the Haymarket Theatre. To complete the list we may note that the comedy of "Money" appeared in 1840, and that "Not so Bad as we Seem; or, Many Sides to a Character," written in aid of a literary charity, of which nothing has been heard for a prolonged period, was produced in 1851, being first performed by amateurs of eminence, and subsequently by professional players at the Haymarket Theatre with rather qualified success. These works constitute the whole of Lord Lytton's writings for the stage.

"The Sea Captain," although very well played—Mr. Macready, Mr. Strickland, Mrs. Warner, and Miss Helen Faucit were engaged in the representation—failed to please on the stage. The printed drama, however, was very largely read, going through four or five editions. A somewhat petulant address prefixed to one of these issues was productive of that irresistibly humorous criticism by "Mr. Charles J. Yellowplush" in *Fraser's Magazine*, thanks to which, perhaps, modern readers may possess some slight acquaintance with "The Sea Captain." With the exception of a few performances at the Surrey Theatre, under Mr. Creswick's management, some seasons back, the play has not hitherto been revived. Indeed, the dramatist himself seems to have thought slightly of the piece, for he has always excluded it from the collected editions of his works. Or it may be that he has been reserving it, with undiminished faith in its general merits, for the opportunity which has been found at last of again presenting it in the theatre. For authors, like the parents of deformed children, are often seen to be overweeningly fond and proud of such of their offspring as secure the least regard and admiration from the general world.

In this way, perhaps, may be explained the pains Lord Lytton has taken with his "Sea Captain" in giving it the form it now wears as "The Rightful Heir." It would have been as easy for him, one would have thought, to have produced an absolutely new work as to have accomplished so much "new-shaping," trimming, and modifying. All the names of the *dramatis personæ* are changed. *Lady Arundel* is now called *Lady Montreville*; *Norman* becomes *Vyryan*, *Lord Ashdale* *Lord Beaufort*; while *Sir Maurice Beever* is rechristened *Sir Grey de Malpas*—although it is difficult to see that any real advantage accrues from these variations. The early scenes now wear a certain historic aspect from the frequent allusions to the Spanish Armada, and room is thus found for sundry bursts of patriotic oratory which close the second act effectively, but otherwise help the story in no way, while they cannot fail to suggest in the minds of the irreverent reference to that famous tragedy by *Mr. Puff* which dealt so largely with the same subject. The last two acts are almost altogether new, and the catastrophe is entirely remodelled. Yet, these changes notwithstanding, it must be said the merits of the work remain very much where they were. "The Rightful Heir" is hardly a better play than "The Sea Captain."

If Lord Lytton were to write an entirely new drama, he would no more produce such a work as "The Rightful Heir," probably, than if he were now to write a new novel he would be content to give to the world such a story as "Ernest Maltravers" or "Godolphin." The plot of the play is wholly of an old-fashioned and effete kind. It pertains legitimately to what we may call the "Keepsake" period of literature. In days when G. P. R. James was a king among novelists it probably would have found admirers, but it is in truth thirty years behind the age. The conflicts between rightful heirs and wrongful heirs have become the jests and by-words of the theatre, the stock materials of caricaturists and burlesque writers, the undisputed property of the most obscure provincial stages. At one period of the performance one almost looked for the appearance of the old-established ghost rising from a riven tomb to confound the guilty and protect the innocent, so completely did the story appear to be adherent to bygone

forms and prescriptions. It may be that the work pretends to be nothing more than a melodrama possessed of certain poetic or quasi-poetic qualities. But even considered in this light, "The Rightful Heir" does not command much esteem. It is immeasurably inferior to the "Lady of Lyons"—our respect for that production having very definite limits. The story is not merely without nature or reality, but it fails to interest, as many a story artfully constructed, although heedless of truth or probability, may yet succeed thoroughly in doing. One scene alone has any genuine dramatic worth. When *Lady Montreville* struggles with her pride, and is at length compelled to recognise the child she had long disowned, the offspring of a secret and shameful marriage, the sympathies of the audience were honestly stirred, as it seemed, for the first and only time throughout the representation. In other respects, although the applause was incessant—for the occasion was one of excitement, the house was very crowded, Lord Lytton was known to be present, and was, indeed, required more than once to come to the front of his box—the play clearly failed to impress or to move the public in any marked degree. For the language of the drama is not so much poetry as prose that has, so to speak, lived in a poetic neighbourhood. There is an abundance of poetic phrases, and the verse moves along mellifluously enough; but poetic thoughts are much less discernible, while occasionally there occur flights of rhapsody that verge perilously upon rhodomontade.

With the exception of Mr. and Mrs. Vezin, always careful and intelligent performers, who represented *Sir Grey de Malpas* and *Lady Montreville*, Lord Lytton has not been fortunate in the actors employed in "The Rightful Heir." A player of moderate capacity, with but a note or two of pathos in his voice and some skill in the delivery of blank verse, might doubtless do much with the character of *Vyvyan*. It affords no opportunities for the display of the great histrionic gifts which were possessed by its original representative, Mr. Macready; still the part is a showy one, and its favour with the audience a matter of certainty. Unfortunately, the *Vyvyan* of the Lyceum is the German-American Mr. Bandmann, a coarse and noisy actor, who has not the remotest idea of reciting blank verse, and

accordingly makes of the long speeches entrusted to him a mere mash of fine words, from which sense and even grammar seemed to be wholly absent. Mr. Bandmann's voice is harsh and monotonous, and his face expressionless. Something of *Ancient Pistol's* manner distinguished his ungainly striding about the stage and his vehement gesticulations, while his incessant smiling at the gallery and self-satisfied glances at the pit made his whole performance ludicrous.

XX.

"MONTE CRISTO."

[Adelphi Theatre.—October 1868.]

TWENTY years ago the actors of the Théâtre Historique—it afterwards became the Lyrique, and was finally swept away altogether by the destroying hand of M. Haussmann—ventured across the Channel and attempted to give at Drury Lane Theatre a representation of their great drama of "Monte Christo." The story bearing the same name, by Alexandre Dumas and Company, upon which, of course, the play was founded, had been the "sensation" novel of the period. Some few years back visitors to Trouville were shown the small chamber in a fisherman's cottage in which M. Dumas and his colleague, M. Maquet, sitting opposite each other at the same table had written, as fast as copying clerks, the first four volumes of "Monte Christo" in sixteen days. The world has hardly yet ceased to wonder at the extraordinary book and the still more extraordinary rapidity with which it was produced. But in 1848 the novel, both in its original and a translated form, had been very cordially received and was highly regarded by the British public.

The actors of the Théâtre Historique and their play, however, were driven from the London stage. There arose a cry about the desecration of Drury Lane. It was true the theatre was in a bankrupt state—had been a few months previously a hippodrome and a concert-room. But it was

held that the presence of the French company upon its boards was a more fatal degradation. Histrionic London rose against the project. There were indignation meetings of English actors, angry placards upon the hoardings, furious letters in the papers, and petitions to the Crown to protect native talent and to discountenance the foreigners. Even the time of the House of Lords was occupied with a discussion of the matter, when Lord Beaumont, deprecating the system of adaptation upon which the London theatres thrived, avowed, reasonably enough, "that if the choice lay between a bad translation of a French piece and the same piece in the original, he should prefer the latter." *Punch* naturally had his humorous say upon the subject, and informed his readers that "the feeling of indignation at the late invasion of the French actors is very strong indeed among the English translators. Many of the members of the Dramatic Authors' Society have sworn themselves in as special constables to take up every French subject directly the said subject shall appear." But neither the arguments of reason nor of humour were of any avail. They were brought to bear upon too dense a stupidity, too angry a prejudice. The Historique players went back to Paris unheard and insulted, carrying their drama of "Monte Christo" along with them.

It was observed at the time that if the "native talent party" had but been patient their end would have been gained by a natural process without recourse to violent and ill-mannered measures. Taken upon its merits simply, "Monte Christo" was not likely to please the London public. It was a prodigiously long play; it even occupied two evenings in performance. Upon the first night the troubles and sufferings of Edmond Dantés were exhibited; on the second night was shown the consummate vengeance taken by him in his character of Monte Christo. The play had this novelty of length in its favour, and that was all. But mere protraction was hardly enough to win for it success. It would, without doubt, have been found outrageously tedious and would have wholly failed. The experiment, however, was not tested—for some few performances afterwards at the St. James's Theatre did not afford a fair criterion of the real nature of the question, and the

"native talent" party were able to congratulate themselves upon the judgment they had "snatched," and the triumph they had obtained by brute force over the foreign actors.

But "the whirligig of Time brings in his revenges." It has seemed good to Mr. Webster to produce at the Adelphi Theatre an English version of this same play of "Monte Cristo." The Adelphi adaptation drops an "h," out of compliment, we presume, to a habit in that respect prevalent on the English stage, and is called "Monte Cristo." The play encountered a very stormy reception. The verdict pronounced upon it was of a most unmistakable kind. For some years there has not been audible in a London theatre so much interruption, hissing, and hooting as was heard in the Adelphi on Saturday night. Mr. Webster and his company have now an experience of the kind of suffering inflicted upon M. Melingue and his playfellows in 1848.

"Monte Cristo" is a feebly written, poorly constructed play, but no doubt its prime offence in the view of the audience was its inordinate length and tediousness. The drama is in five acts, and the curtain rose upon it punctually at a quarter to eight. At half-past eleven three acts only had been completed, and already the patience of the audience, having sustained very gallantly much severe trial, was thoroughly exhausted. It was conjectured that the conclusion of the piece would be arrived at somewhere about three o'clock on the Sunday morning. The actors, for no fault of their own, were jeered at, interrogated, "chaffed," after a most merciless fashion. "Shall you be long, sir?" was the ironically polite inquiry addressed to each player as he entered to speak his part. The British public when once it loses its forbearance loses it very thoroughly indeed. But although its wrath on the present occasion assumed somewhat gross and rude forms of manifestation, it had certainly warrant and justification under the circumstances of the case. A play that *will* not move on, episodes without interest, dialogue that appears interminable, and is as dull as it is long, mysteries that come to nothing, and situations that "hang fire," assuredly entitle the audience to express their discontent in the most ready manner that occurs to them. Accordingly "Monte Cristo" met with condemnation of a very thorough kind indeed.

Its length was fatal to it, but even had the play been less voluminous, it may be doubted if it would have given much more satisfaction. The sufferings of *Dantès* are such as secure commiseration; but the audience can hardly follow with sympathy the cold-blooded calculation of his scheme of vengeance. Then the English dramatist has tampered with his materials in a most perilous manner. He has ruined the character of *Mercédès*, the heroine of the story. An English audience has not much pity for unmarried mothers. Yet, in "*Monte Christo*," *Mercédès* is found to have given birth to a child of which *Dantès* is the father without being the lady's husband. Indeed, *Dantès* himself loses much of his heroic character when he is thus shown to have seduced the woman he professes to love. Then the part played by Mr. Webster is made far too prominent. Opportunity is found for his wearing many ingenious disguises, and displaying his well-known skill in the art of "making up;" but these expedients are of no real assistance to the play, and, indeed, helped to delay its progress in the fatal manner we have described.

Mr. Fechter exerted himself to the utmost; Miss Leclercq was the *Mercédès*; Mrs. Mellon undertook the part of *Albert de Morceuf*, and Mr. Belmore represented Caderousse—so that altogether the cast was one of some strength. All was in vain, however. We must use the old-fashioned word, now that the old-fashioned event has recurred: "*Monte Cristo*" was *damned*.

XXI.

"SCHOOL."

[Prince of Wales Theatre.—January 1869.]

A GERMAN original lies at the foundation of Mr. Robertson's comedy of "*School*," which seems, moreover, something indebted to one of those fairy stories which Miss Thackeray has recently translated into every-day incident and modern life. The heroine of the comedy is a *Miss Bella Marks*, an

orphan girl, who occupies the position of pupil teacher in an academy for young ladies, called Cedar-grove House, of which *Dr.* and *Mrs. Sutcliffe* are the proprietors and principals. In the opening scene Bella Marks is discovered reading aloud the story of "Cinderella" to a picturesque group of her fellow pupils, who, by-the-by, must be said to be making acquaintance with the old nursery narrative at a somewhat advanced period of their scholastic career. *Bella* is herself a sort of Cinderella; she is required to perform distinctly menial duties in *Mrs. Sutcliffe's* household, and, on the dispersion of the school girls, owing to the approach of a shooting party of gentlemen and to some alarm as to the presence of an ill-tempered bull in the neighbourhood, she takes to flight, leaving her slipper behind her. The bull is shot by *Mr. Pointz*, and the slipper is found by *Lord Beaufoy*, two members of the shooting party, who are visitors at the house of *Mr. Farintosh*, the uncle of the young nobleman. *Mr. Farintosh*, a padded, rouged, and bewigged old gentleman, whose attempts at youthful airiness of manner contrast curiously with his manifold and conspicuous infirmities, is an old college friend of *Dr. Sutcliffe*, and is most anxious that his nephew, *Lord Beaufoy*, should marry *Miss Naomi Tighe*, an heiress, who is a pupil at Cedar-grove House. The gentlemen obtain admission to the academy, but it soon becomes apparent that *Lord Beaufoy* has fallen in love with *Cinderella*, and that *Miss Tighe's* union with *Mr. Pointz* will certainly happen sooner or later. After this the fairy story is comparatively neglected until quite the close of the play, and the plot stands still for some time while the humours of life at a girl's school are being thoroughly investigated and displayed. Certainly the Sutcliffe Academy would seem to have been an establishment of an exceptional kind. Attached to the educational staff is an usher, one *Mr. Krux*, who has paid unsuccessful suit to *Miss Marks*, and in revenge for his disappointment acts as a spy upon her movements, and conveys to the heads of the school an unpleasant and unfaithful report of her relations with *Lord Beaufoy*. *Bella* is dismissed the academy with ignominy, and for some time her fate is uncertain. Meanwhile it has been discovered that she is in truth the grandchild of

wealthy *Mr. Farintosh*, who, after a severe illness, abandons artifices and cosmetics and presents himself as a very venerable looking gentleman, freely manifesting the liberal disposition and the overflowing heart that have throughout been his legitimate if carefully concealed and unsuspected possessions—an incident clearly borrowed from the dramatic version of George Sand's "*Beaux Messieurs de Bois-Doré*," which was played last year at the Odéon. Finally, all uneasiness on account of *Bella* is set at rest. She steps from her carriage attended by powdered footmen. She is the wife of *Lord Beaufoy*; the prince, marrying *Cinderella*, has, in fact, given his hand and his title to his "first cousin once removed." The wicked usher is cudgelled by *Mr. Pointz*, who receives as his reward the love and the fortune of *Miss Naomi Tighe*; and; the demands of poetic justice thus thoroughly satisfied in every respect, the drama ends.

It will be observed that the plot of "*School*" is of slight substance, and that the events and characters of the comedy are not of a very unfamiliar kind. Yet the story in representation is far from being without interest, and the quiet vein of sentiment pervading it, attributable to the old poetic fable with which it maintains an intermittent sort of alliance, helped to secure for it the approval of the public. The first act is perhaps the best from a certain freshness of contrivance which distinguishes it, although the billing and cooing by moonlight of the two pairs of lovers in the third act may find more positive popularity; the second act, containing an examination of the school-girls in geography and Roman history, much comicality of a commonplace kind being occasioned by their elaborately erroneous replies, crosses the border-line of farce, and the concluding act is of too artificial a pattern—the discovery of a long lost child as the solution of a dramatic dilemma being a somewhat exhausted device. It may be noted that the limited size of the Prince of Wales Theatre is of real advantage to the class of plays Mr. Robertson is fond of producing; a story gains in strength and significance by being brought so closely to the view of the spectators; and the players are not constrained to unnatural shouting and grimacing in order that their speeches may be heard and the expression of their faces seen from distant portions

of the house. Both author and actors are thus enabled to avoid the exaggeration of language and manner which has long been a prominent failing in dramatic writing and representation.

Although it failed, no doubt, to stir the sympathies of the audience so deeply as did the play of "Caste," which still remains its author's best production, the success of "School" was unquestionable. The general representation was creditable to the Prince of Wales's company. Miss Addison, as the *Cinderella* of the drama, plays with much delicate pathos. Mr. Montague, though he is deficient in tenderness, is easy and agreeable as "the prince," *Lord Beaufoy*; the more prosaic and humorous lovers are well represented by Mr. Bancroft and Miss Wilton, and Mr. Hare provides a very finished presentment of the cosmeticised and decrepit *Mr. Farintosh*.

XXII.

"DREAMS."

[Gaiety Theatre.—March 1869.]

"DREAMS" is founded upon a short story published a few years back in a collection of novelettes entitled "A Bunch of Keys," the work of various authors. In its original form the story is of no very robust nature—indeed, it never purported to be more than a contribution of a simple and ordinary pattern to a magazine of light literature—and its want of substance becomes strikingly apparent when it is compelled to assume the dimensions and guise of a five-act play. But the art of dilution and protraction has always been a favourite study of our dramatists. "Dreams" is a remarkable instance of a playwright's method of so manipulating a very slight subject as to make it, at any rate, *seem* strong enough for his purpose. One *Rudolph Harfthal*, a young composer living at Mayence, regardless of the affection entertained for him by his foster-sister *Lina*, quits his home to visit England. He designs to gain a livelihood by giving

singing lessons, and to bring out an opera of his own composition. He falls in love with one of his pupils, the granddaughter of a duke, and asks her hand in marriage. She promptly rejects his suit. He feels the disappointment acutely, becomes very ill, is for a while, indeed, almost insane. During his illness he is tenderly nursed by his foster-sister. The natural result follows. He recovers his health, overcomes his ill-requited passion, and in the end becomes the happy husband of *Lina*.

This is the main theme of Mr. Robertson's new play, and of the original story in the "Bunch of Keys;" but of course in decanting the magazine pint into the dramatic quart, much additional material has to be made available, or the measure would appear short of its proper quantity. The story is therefore taken up at its earliest point and greatly elaborated. The first act shows the spectators *Rudolph's* home at Mayence. His parents, the *Rittmeister* and the *Frau Harfthal*, are introduced, and the young man's clothes are seen to be duly packed for his journey to England. Further, one *Mr. John Hibbs* is brought on the scene—a London bagman, who has little real connection with the plot, but who occupies time, and is one of those personages familiar to the stage who dress preposterously and comport themselves facetiously, and so acquire a sort of conventional reputation for exciting diversion. Then the heroine, who by-the-by, is designated *Lady Clara Vere de Vere*, is provided with a lover in the person of the *Earl of Mount-Forrestcourt*. Upon the rejection of *Rudolph's* suit and his subsequent illness, his father comes to England and challenges to mortal combat, on his son's behalf, the *Earl of Mount-Forrestcourt*; and a duel with sabres is actually supposed to take place—at midnight in a park near Windsor, with summer lightning the while flashing upon the scene of the encounter—between the English nobleman and the German *Rittmeister*. *Lord Mount-Forrestcourt* is seriously wounded, and measures are taken for the arrest of the elder *Harfthal*. *Rudolph*, to screen his father, gives himself up as the duellist, and is taken to prison accordingly and tried for his life. The nobleman recovers, however, and his evidence acquits *Rudolph*. Meanwhile additional difficulties intercept the conclusion of the play in the fact that *Lina*

has found refuge in a convent, and she has to be released from such obligations as she has taken upon herself before she can finally yield to the reluctant wooing of *Rudolph*.

That this story, with all its gross improbabilities, contains an element of romantic interest sufficient in itself to move sympathy and win approval cannot be gainsaid; but the episodic matter does not so much assist as embarrass the plot. The foundation is originally weak, and every superfluous stone that is added to the building, so far from imparting further strength to it, only ensures its speedier downfall. There is but one really effective scene in "Dreams:" the love-making over the music lesson and the repulse of *Rudolph's* advances in the second act. The transfer of his affection to *Lina* is inartistically contrived; indeed, at all times changes of feeling of this kind on the stage cannot be divested of an unpleasant abruptness. Even Romeo's love for Juliet would fail somewhat in its effect upon the audience if Rosaline had been first brought in person upon the scene, had figured prominently among the characters, and the lover's earlier passion for that lady had occupied two or three acts of the play. At best, "Dreams" contains only sufficient material for a short romantic play in two acts. Reduced to that form, it would bear some resemblance to Dr. Marston's little drama "The Hard Struggle," produced at the Lyceum Theatre about ten years ago, and would probably enjoy a corresponding measure of success. The more closely the slender lines of the original story are adhered to and all extraneous incidents excised, the greater will become the chances of the play's prosperity.

Moreover, the luckless passion of the humble German of genius for the English lady of noble lineage failed to excite the commiseration which should legitimately have pertained to it. Perhaps the lover was too humble—certainly he wore the dress and aspect of a mechanic—and it seemed to be the general feeling of the audience that he merited the scorn with which his suit was received. Even the haughty aristocrat who ultimately wins the hand of the *Lady Clara*, and is supposed to be a gentleman of limited intelligence—though Mr. Robertson, after his usual manner, has entrusted to this character the smartest speeches in the

play—was more favourably regarded by the spectators than the gifted musician who betrays the confidence reposed in him by making love to his pupil. One felt that the lady was right, and that the lover was wrong, and had, indeed, little to complain of; a conclusion the author did not contemplate or desire that his audience should arrive at. But then he should have been more careful to lay stress upon the romantic rather than the common-sense side of his subject.

Mr. Wigan appears as *Rudolph*, and—possibly under the delusion that two bad parts are equal to one good one—also undertakes the character of the *Rittmeister*. In favour of this system of "doubling," as it is called, there is little to be said. Nothing hinges upon the likeness between the father and son, and the desire to excite surprise by rapid changes of costume should be beneath an actor of Mr. Wigan's reputation. No doubt some applause is excited by such means, but the situations and illusions of the play are gravely affected. After each exit of the father or the son the idea haunts the spectator that the actor is in the hands of his dresser in the wings hurriedly shifting his clothes, and forthwith will present himself under changed conditions. Mr. Wigan played somewhat languidly and flatly. The actor succeeds better in representing the undercurrents of emotion than the surface fervour and impulsiveness which are the characteristics of the German musician. Mr. Clayton shows distinct advance in his performance of *Lord Mount-Forrestcourt*, while Miss Robertson has not hitherto been seen to such advantage as in the part of *Lady Clara*. The two octogenarians—the *Duke of Loamshire* and his oldest tenant, *John Gray*—though well played by Messrs. Maclean and Eldred, have no sort of connection with the drama, and should be amongst the earliest suppressions.

XXIII.

"BLACK AND WHITE."

[Adelphi Theatre.—April 1869.]

THE scene of Mr. Wilkie Collins's new play is laid in the island of Trinidad, and the events dealt with are supposed to have occurred some forty years ago, before the passing of the Emancipation Act. The characters, however, are careful to dress in the style of the present day. The hero of the story is one *Maurice de Layrac*, a French gentleman, who has encountered in Paris the West Indian heiress, *Miss Milburn*, and regarding her tenderly has accepted an invitation she had playfully given him to be present at a ball in Trinidad on the occasion of her birthday. *Maurice's* gallantry places him in a most distressing situation. Arrived in the island it is forthwith discovered that he is the son of a quadroon, and a slave. The secret of his birth is disclosed to him by his dying mother, and unfortunately the revelation is not heard by him alone. *Miss Milburn* is listening at the door, and *Stephen Westcraft*, a fierce planter, who is also in love with the lady, has stationed himself on the roof of the hut in which the painful story is told, and has lost no word of it. Neither of the listeners, however, is supposed to be conscious of the other's presence. The situation is a striking one, if a little ludicrous, and too obviously referable to *Mr. Puff's* principle that "if people who want to listen or overhear were not always connived at on the stage there would be no carrying on any plot in the world." *Miss Milburn* has now to struggle between her love for *Maurice* and her caste prejudices. Affection triumphs, and she resolves to overlook the taint of black blood in his veins, and to accept the Octoroon as her lover and husband. Still, *Maurice's* plight is simply desperate. The plantation to which he pertains as part of the live stock is about to be sold by public auction. *Westcraft* publicly denounces him as a runaway slave in the market-place of Trinidad, and causes him to be arrested and

thrown into prison. *Miss Milburn* determines to invest her whole fortune, if need be, in the purchase of her lover, when he shall be put up for sale. She has more money than *Westcraft*, and defies him to do his worst. He discovers that under the conditions of sale the estate may be disposed of by private contract without being brought to auction, and, paying the stipulated price, anticipates *Miss Milburn's* plan and becomes the proprietor of *Maurice*. The fortunes of the lovers are now at their very worst, when, happily, *David Michaelmas*, the faithful servant of *Maurice*, after most arduous search, discovers papers that prove *Ruth*, the quadroon, to have been manumitted, and establish the fact that *Maurice* is a free man. The curtain falls upon the union of the lovers and the complete discomfiture of *Westcraft*, who has exhausted his means in the purchase of an estate he does not want, and whom it may be supposed further punishment awaits, in the fact that the British Legislature is about to abolish slavery altogether.

Although composed of no very new ingredients, and unpretending in regard to literary merit, the play, from its neatness of construction and the interest of its fable, is found to be unusually effective in representation. Of late melodrama has so allied itself with the involved and the incoherent, and the skill of the dramatist has been so sacrificed to the arts of the scene painter and the machinist, that it is a sort of relief to find once more a play endowed with an intelligible plot, legitimately stirring the audience by the unstrained development of its incidents, and affording good opportunities for histrionic effort to the actors engaged in the performance. The story can be readily followed, moves briskly, interests without perplexing, and is throughout closely and succinctly set forth. It is not a work of high order, but it is certainly a commendable specimen of its class. The least effective scene is, perhaps, the search for the lost papers in "the closed room at Brentwood House." Mr. Wilkie Collins has oftentimes made incidents of this kind available in his novels; but the minute details of hide and seek are more impressive when aided by the imagination of the reader than when substantially rendered on the stage; the "question of time" necessarily affecting

the occasion with an air of hurry and abruptness in lieu of the protracted diligence and painstaking proper to it.

Mr. Fechter appears as *Maurice*, and has not for some time been so well suited with a part. Fervid demonstration of affection on the stage is apt to present itself to certain of the audience in something of a comic light. Mr. Fechter, however, is able to lift his love-making scenes out of danger of this kind, and even when, as sometimes happens, his manner trembles on the verge of extravagance, he makes it felt that this is not, at any rate, a defect of a conventional kind, habitual in the English theatre, but is individual and personal, explicable by the fact of his nationality. He represents strikingly the condition of depression and shame into which *Maurice* is plunged by the discovery that he is slave-born, while he declaims with remarkable vigour the speech in the market-place, in which he bids Westcraft defiance. Mr. Fechter is well supported by Miss Leclercq, who appears as the heroine. Mr. Belmore plays with good effect the part of *Plato*, a free negro, whose utterances, if not unctuously humorous, have yet a curious dry pleasantry about them. *Plato* is a Conservative black, who would obtain the colony for his race by a system of inaction or refusal to work, in opposition to the Liberal negroes who propose to attain a like end by a general massacre of the white population.

XXIV.

"MARY WARNER."

[Haymarket Theatre.—June 1869.]

MR. TOM TAYLOR'S "Mary Warner" differs in little respect from those plays of the prisoners' van, as they may be called, which, indigenous to the suburban stage, have of late years taken root and thriven in the theatres of Western London. The taste for this school of dramatic entertainment has increased and spread with epidemical force and swiftness. Theatre after theatre has caught the complaint, and manifested its diagnostics with more or less complete-

ness. Again and again has the dramatic mirror been held up to circumstantial evidence ; crime has been shown its own features, delirium tremens its own image, and the detective policeman has been reflected in every variety of type. It is with regret we have now to chronicle that the Haymarket Theatre, hitherto devoted to better uses and distinguished for representations of a more refined class, has also fallen a victim to the infection under mention : has, indeed, been seized with an attack of dramatic jail-fever of a most virulent kind.

George Warner and *Bob Levitt* are fellow-workmen, in the service of *Messrs. Dutton and Downes*, of Lambeth, mechanical engineers. The shopmates present the familiar contrast of character. *George* is everything that is good ; *Bob* everything that is bad. Dismissed from the works for incompetence, *Bob* steals his employers' cash-box, containing a large sum in bank-notes. A share of this ill-gotten money he hands over to *George*, and leaves in *George's* lodgings the cash-box and other evidences of guilt. *George* is suspected, some of the missing notes are found in his possession, and he is charged with the crime. The case against him is apparently so strong that even his wife, *Mary Warner*, is convinced of his dishonesty. Thereupon, to save him from imprisonment and disgrace, she makes a false confession of guilt, and avows that it was she, and not her husband, who stole the cash-box. She undergoes five years' penal servitude in Brixton jail. *George* naturally, believing his wife to be the thief she confessed herself, visits her but once during her captivity. An angry scene ensues between them. Each believes the other to be guilty of felony. *George* is ashamed of his wife, and treats her with coldness ; she rebukes him for his cruelty and ingratitude in suffering her to bear, unsolaced, and unthanked, the penalty of his wrong-doing. Upon her release from prison she determines not to rejoin her husband, and sinks very low indeed in the social scale. She is without means ; she cannot obtain employment, and is driven to pawn her wedding-ring to buy food. Presently she is again in the hands of justice. She is taken to a police-court, charged with "accosting" a gentleman in Westminster and robbing him of his purse. The gentleman is no other than her

husband, *George Warner*, who has risen in the world, and, no longer a working man, has become an employer of labour and a capitalist. The husband withdraws the charge against his wife on the ground that he cannot identify her as the lady who accosted him. Nor was *Mary Warner* in truth guilty of this impropriety : the real offender being a wretched friend of hers, one *Milly*, the wife of *Bob Levitt*, the thief of the earlier scenes. What with sloth, drink, and remorse, *Bob* has become reduced to a very deplorable state. The conclusion is now obvious. Weakened by gin and penury, *Bob's* moral constitution becomes pervious to virtuous influences. He makes a tardy confession of his theft of *Messrs. Dutton and Downes's* cash-box. The curtain falls upon the restoration of a good understanding between *Mr. and Mrs. Warner*, and their thorough conviction at last of each other's innocence.

This remarkably unpleasant story is set forth at great length and presented on the stage with even more than the ordinary regard for realism of effect distinguishing the performance of works of the class. One scene is occupied with vast steam engines in full operation ; in another a picture of the interior of Brixton prison is provided. There are further, elaborate representations of a squalid alley in Lambeth lit with real gas-lamps ; of a grimy garret interior commanding the usual fine view of the illuminated clock tower at Westminster ; and of a police court with prisoner's dock, witness-box, constables, spectators, and presiding magistrate all complete. No pains have been spared to impart vividness and reality to the play down to its most repulsive particulars.

The character of *Mary Warner* is sustained by Miss Bateman, and would seem to have been expressly devised for that actress. She has not hitherto essayed the drama of domestic crime, but there is much in "*Mary Warner*" suggestive of study of the best points in Miss Bateman's one successful part of *Leah*. *Mary Warner's* impassioned rebuke of her husband in the prison scene is distinctly referable to *Leah's* denunciation of her faithless lover, *Rudolph*, and the introduction of the child to be caressed and sobbed over in the last scene of "*Mary Warner*" is surely a reproduction of the closing situation in "*Leah*."

At the same time, it should be said that Miss Bateman played with very genuine force and feeling. A certain hardness of manner that pertains to her was not unsuited to the character, while she kept well under control that inclination to extravagance of action and excessive violence of declamation which has hitherto much detracted from the merit of her acting. On the whole, she has perhaps played no part so evenly, and therefore so well, as *Mary Warner*. Whether the part was worth playing at all is another question.

The general performance of the drama by the Haymarket company was commendable. Mr. Howe and Mr. Kendal represented the good and bad workmen respectively; Mr. Compton was comic as a sergeant of police, and Miss Hill gave much vivacity to the part of *Milly Levitt*. The audience seemed disposed to regard the play indulgently, and upon its conclusion summoned Mr. Taylor upon the stage to receive applause and congratulations. Yet from time to time were audible significant expressions of dissent from this affable view of the entertainment.

XXV.

“THE GAMESTER.”

[Holborn Theatre.—October 1869.]

THIS gloomy work, though occasionally represented during Mr. Charles Kean's tenancy of the Princess's Theatre, has been so rarely seen in London of late years that it must be as a new production to the majority of our playgoers. That it is a novelty of an exhilarating kind certainly cannot be said of it, however; for “The Gamester” has been long regarded, with considerable justice, as the very essence of dramatic dolefulness. From first to last it is unrelieved tragedy—a prolonged monotonous wail of tribulation. Nor does it contain that poetic element which by many is found assuasive of melancholy. Although it is understood that “The Gamester” was originally written partly in blank verse, before the play came upon the stage its language

throughout had been levelled to prose. That it should have lived so long is, perhaps, hardly more surprising than that it should have lived at all. In the first instance, indeed, its success was but of a qualified kind. It was originally produced at Drury Lane under Garrick's management, in 1753, when, for some reason, Mr. Moore was unpopular and Dr. Spence, of "Anecdotes" fame, bore for a period the responsibilities attaching to the authorship of the play. It was objected to, not on account of its gloom, however, but rather because gaming was much in vogue and "the quality" did not care to have their frailties made the theme of a theatrical exhibition. "The passion of gaming," said the author of "Night Thoughts," who had seen the drama in manuscript and greatly approved of it, "needed such a caustic as the last scene of this tragedy." In the last century plays were as much read as novels are now, and we find Mrs. Delany writing to her sister—"I have read and wept over 'The Gamester.' The characters are pretty, the language poor, but some pretty strokes in it, and I think it a very proper play at this time to be represented." Walpole speaks of it as "that detestable play." The vitality of "The Gamester" is, no doubt, attributable to the fondness the actors have always entertained for it. Garrick and Mrs. Pritchard were the original representatives of *Mr.* and *Mrs. Beverley*, and the great actor is said to have himself "written up" *Lewson's* scene in the fourth act, because he wished Mossop to play *Lewson*, and was anxious to assign to an inferior performer the part of *Stukely*, which properly belonged to Mossop, but who might in that character have interfered with the manager's efforts as *Beverley*. *Stukely* was therefore entrusted to Tom Davies, an actor who was very unlikely to outshine his chief. But the play probably acquired its greatest prosperity when, thirty years later, it came to be a favourite with the Kemble family. A cast that could include the *Mrs. Beverley* of Mrs. Siddons, the *Beverley* of John Kemble, the *Lewson* of Charles, and the *Stukely* of Cooke, was assured of public approval. Any play so strongly supported must have won the favour of the town. Thus "The Gamester" became famous, and took high rank as a stock piece.

That a drama which has engaged the exertions of the most illustrious of English actors provides many opportunities for histrionic display need hardly be said. At the same time it would be easy to overrate the merits of "The Gamester" in this respect. *Mrs. Beverley* is no doubt a striking part; yet the lady is called upon throughout to express only wifely fidelity and devotion, and sorrow for her husband's misconduct. She is furnished, however, with some powerful speeches, and the scene in which she repulses the advances of *Stukely* is susceptible of very effective rendering. *Beverley* is but a poor creature, who at no time enlists the sympathies of his audience. His passion for play is without the enthusiasm that might have gained for it some measure of respect. The spectator can only feel contempt for a man who so readily permits himself to be duped, and endures his misfortunes with so little fortitude. Still *Beverley* is permitted one of those agonising death-scenes which have always been dear to tragedians. He takes poison in prison and is at liberty to writhe convulsively upon the stage, to kneel in prayer, and gasp with anguish, to his heart's content. *Stukely* is the conventional unmitigated villain; and *Lewson* rises very little above the position of a walking gentleman.

The reception of "The Gamester" at the Holborn Theatre seems to show that English audiences are yet prepared to find enjoyment in tragedy. Each scene of the play is followed with marked attention, and great applause attends the fall of the curtain. The tragedy has been produced with due regard to scenic appointments and decorations; the costumes pertaining rather to the Kemble than the Garrick period. Hair powder is eschewed, and the dresses are of the sober fashion that obtained during the later years of George III.'s reign. Mr. Barry Sullivan is well versed in the traditional style of presenting *Beverley's* troubles, and plays the part with considerable power. That many of the speeches should be delivered in an extravagant style of elocution, and that the death-scene should be painfully elaborated, must be regarded as a tribute to the established rules of the stage. The author's language—"numerous prose" it used to be designated in the last century—is of a highflown, decorated kind

that almost bids defiance to simplicity of delivery. Mr. Sullivan's exertions—and a performance of *Beverley* is no light tax upon the physical resources of an actor—were rewarded with continual applause. Mrs. Vezin appears as *Mrs. Beverley*, and though lacking the strength and compass of voice required for delivering with full effect what are known as “the Siddons points” of the part, the actress displayed much feeling, and largely enlisted the sympathies of her audience. Mr. Cowper gave a subdued and careful portraiture of the villanous *Stukely*. Mr. Stephens was quite pathetic enough as the faithful *Jarvis*, and Mr. Rayne acquitted himself tolerably as the chivalrous *Lewson*.

XXVI.

“THE MAN OF QUALITY.”

[Gaiety Theatre.—May 1870.]

THERE has been presented, under the title of “The Man of Quality,” a selection of the scenes in Vanbrugh’s comedy of “The Relapse ; or, Virtue in Danger,” relating more especially to the adventures of Lord Foppington, Tom Fashion, and Miss Hoyden. “The Relapse” was first produced at Drury Lane Theatre in 1697, having been hurriedly written, in less than six weeks, as a sequel to Cibber’s comedy of “Love’s Last Shift ; or, The Fool in Fashion,” which had won the applause of the town during the previous season. Cibber had greatly contributed to the success of his play by sustaining the leading character of *Sir Novelty Fashion*, and he undertook to appear in Vanbrugh’s work as *Lord Foppington*, who is, indeed, *Sir Novelty* raised to the peerage in consideration of a payment of ten thousand pounds. *Lord Foppington*’s popularity was so marked that Cibber ventured, a little later, to reintroduce him to the public in “The Careless Husband,” in many respects the author’s most complete work. Altogether, *Foppington* would seem to have enjoyed among playgoers of his generation the kind of favour that was *Falstaff*’s in

an earlier, and has been *Lord Dundreary's* in a later, age. He could hardly be brought too frequently upon the scene.

In its own day, however, the extreme licence of "The Relapse" excited sharp censure; and although the author disclaimed all intention to offend, and even ventured so far as to assert of his play his "steady faith that there is not one woman of real reputation in town but when she has read it impartially over in her closet will find it so innocent she'll think it no affront to her Prayer Book to lay it upon the same shelf," it is indisputable that the severity of the critics had only too much warrant. Still, the merits of the work as an acting play, the humour of its characters, the liveliness of its dialogue, and the frolic of its situations, have endowed it with remarkable vitality. It obtained a new lease of life when Sheridan in 1777 modified it, without, however, purifying it very thoroughly, and reproduced it under the title of "A Trip to Scarborough." Long after the public had forgotten all about *Loveless's* reformation, as shown in "Love's Last Shift," they were content to be entertained by the spectacle of his new frailties in "The Relapse." Sheridan's alterations were abandoned, and the original play, with some condensation, represented so late as 1847 at the Olympic Theatre, under the management of Mr. Bolton, when Mr. Leigh Murray appeared as *Loveless*, and the characters of *Lord Foppington* and *Miss Hoyden* were supported by Mr. and Mrs. Walter Lacy. A few performances of "The Relapse" were also given in 1850 at the Strand Theatre during its occupation by Mr. Farren.

"The Man of Quality" is in three short acts, the dialogue being carefully revised without any needless tampering with its spirit and humour. The characters of *Loveless*, his wife *Amanda*, the vivacious widow *Berinthia*, and the ardent lover *Worthy* are suppressed, and the underplot of the original work—*Tom Fashion's* trick of personating *Lord Foppington*, and marrying *Miss Hoyden* in his stead—becomes the main theme of the adaptation. *Lord Foppington* is thus made the central figure of the story, and no doubt suffers in some degree from being parted from the other fine ladies and gentlemen, his old associates and supporters of the complete comedy. His extravagant airs seem still more extravagant

in the absence of the courtliness and distinction of *Loveless* and *Berinthia*, which form a sort of connecting link between his caricature bearing and the accepted "quality" manners of his time. To a modern audience unread in regard to the old comedies, and unsympathetic with the fashions and fancies of the past, *Foppington* may not appear to be a very intelligible creature. Even Cibber in his later life was found lamenting the decay of "the fine gentleman" of his youth. Men of fashion, he averred, had abandoned the stately mien of peacocks for the pert air of lapwings. The beau who had figured so conspicuously in comedy since the Restoration, and found representatives in *Foppington*, *Sir Courtly Nice*, *Sir Fopling Flutter*, and similar characters, had already begun to degenerate. Yet even now he haunts the stage after a dim, feeble fashion, as the exquisite with a lisp and an eyeglass. Nevertheless, *Lord Foppington's* peculiarities are so clearly defined, his character is so skilfully drawn, he is entrusted with the delivery of so much comic prattle, and is thrown into such ludicrous situations, that he still affords genuine diversion. At the Gaiety the part is played by Mr. Wigan, who spares no pains to render it theatrically effective. The actor contrives to look the character admirably, banishes intelligence from his face, assumes an air of pompous inanity, and delivers the affected, drawling, mincing nonsense of *Lord Foppington's* speeches with excellent drollery. Mr. Wigan's performance was greeted with prolonged applause. He is well supported by the *Hoyden* of Miss Farren, who invests the part with abundant vivacity and activity, and manifests capacity for more artistic occupation than she obtains in the excesses of burlesque to which her efforts are usually confined. The little part of the *Nurse* was filled naturally and intelligently by Mrs. Leigh. In other respects the comedy was only tolerably sustained. Mr. Maclean is forcible enough as *Sir Tunbally Clumsey*, but his humour is not sufficiently unctuous to gain toleration for the grossness of manner and speech of the tipsy country squire. Mr. Rayne wants ease and finish as *Young Fashion*, though he renders his share in the witty dialogue with good sense and elocutionary skill. It may be noted that *Young Fashion* was originally played by a woman. The parts of

Lory, Coupler, and *Mr. Bull*, the chaplain, suffered from misconception or lack of ability on the part of their representatives.

XXVII.

"TWO ROSES."

[Vaudeville Theatre.—June 1870.]

Lottie and *Ida*—a blonde and a brunette—the daughters of one *Digby Grant*, are the joint heroines of *Mr. J. Albery's* new comedy. The complimentary title "Two Roses" has been bestowed upon them by their lovers, *Jack Wyatt*, a young author, and his friend, *Caleb Deecie*, a blind man. *Digby Grant* is a worthless gentleman, who has squandered his means and is supported by a small allowance paid to him quarterly by the family of his deceased wife. He occupies humble lodgings in a retired Kentish village, and is much inconvenienced by reason of his large inclinations towards profuse outlay and the distressing smallness of his income. To the aristocratic pretensions of a *Montague Tigg* he unites the sham sentiment and the real sordidness of the Father of the Marshalsea—old *Mr. Dorritt*. He cherishes the remains of his good looks, dresses with shabby splendour, refers magniloquently to his former position, and plumes himself upon his polished air and mien, his misfortunes notwithstanding. Meanwhile he is wretchedly anxious that his "roses" should secure *Wyatt* and *Deecie* for their husbands, borrows small sums of the young men, sinks into debt with his landlady, and even condescends to accept presents of wine and food and raiment from a kind-hearted but very vulgar bagman, one *Mr. Jenkins*, who travels periodically through Kent loaded with various samples and in quest of orders for the London house he represents, and who is much impressed by *Mr. Grant's* grand manners and elevated method of conversation. By a sudden turn of fortune's wheel the father of the "roses" is greatly benefited. He is discovered to be entitled to something like ten thousand a year, and the lawyer who brings the

news to him places at once to his credit at a neighbouring bank a considerable sum to meet his immediate requirements. *Mr. Grant's* real character is forthwith manifested. He comports himself after the fashion of the proverbial beggar on horseback. He rudely terminates the engagements of his daughters, and with ungrateful arrogance hands cheques in discharge of his liabilities to the lovers, to his landlady, and to *Mr. Jenkins*, the bagman, and declines in his prosperity all further association with these good friends of his adversity. This scene, well written, ingeniously contrived, and cleverly acted, closed the first act of the drama very successfully.

Six months elapse, and the action of the story is transferred to London. *Jack Wyatt* and his friend *Caleb* are lodgers in the house of *Mr. Jenkins*, who has married a rich widow of imperious nature, afflicted, moreover, with that fondness for chapel going and the "shining lights" of the Methodist world which *Mr. Weller, senior*, found so grievous in his second helpmate. *Wyatt* is moody and miserable on account of the loss of his "rose," *Lottie*. *Caleb*, of happier nature, comforts him as best he can. *Jenkins* struggles with his spouse, and is driven to the meanest expedients to avoid chapels and meetings, and to escape the sombre dress of a deacon or an elder, which *Mrs. Jenkins* would have the once *débonnair* bagman assume. He is evidently yielding, however, to the force of circumstances and of a will stronger and more assertive than his own. Of the fortunate *Grants* little is heard. It is presently shown, however, that *Lottie* is in league with *Mrs. Jenkins*, and, unsuspected by *Wyatt*, is constantly watching over him, visiting his rooms in his absence, and conferring all sorts of benefactions upon him, for which it would seem *Mrs. Jenkins* does not scruple to charge her lodger in his weekly bill. The lawyer reappears, and drops hints that *Mr. Grant's* title to his property is not unimpeachable. The audience are, indeed, permitted to suspect that the rightful heir to the ten thousand a year is none other than *Jack Wyatt*. Suddenly *Mr. Grant* discovers his daughter's visits to the lodgings. He has an acrimonious interview with *Wyatt*, in the course of which he is shown the cheque he had given in the first act, carefully preserved under a

glass case as a curiosity of ingratitude. The act terminates with the most complete sundering of the lovers, and the establishment of angry feeling on all sides.

The third act exhibits *Mr. Grant*, who has taken the name of *De Chaperon*, as the master of Vassalwick Grange, and in full possession of his lordly income. He suffers from the gout, but he has entered Parliament, has even been listened to with some attention—on "Wednesdays;" and is an eminent patron of religious and philanthropic institutions. His position seems most enviably secure and thriving. A fête is being held in his grounds; the charity children of the neighbourhood are being regaled with tea and buns; a silver tea-service is to be presented to him as a testimonial—it has been paid for chiefly by himself; and he is to receive a congratulatory address from his tenants, friends, and admirers. Just as he is about to return thanks for these honours comes the crushing discovery of the rightful heir in the person of *Caleb Deecie*, the blind man. *Mr. Grant* is compelled to relinquish the wealth he has so ill deserved, and to resume his former state of poverty. He is glad to make peace with the friends he had outraged, and the curtain falls upon the reunion of "the roses" and their lovers.

The play was thoroughly successful, and, what is more, merited its success. The story is interesting and well constructed, allowing for some little obscurity here and there in regard to the motives influencing the action of the characters, and a certain incoherence attaching to the title of the rightful heir. The dialogue is throughout animated, and often irresistibly humorous, although certainly inclining to undue breadth now and then; the more sentimental passages are written with delicacy and genuine feeling. The author has furnished the players with marked personages to embody and with good opportunities for acting. The Vaudeville troop showed themselves equal to the occasion. The burthen of the representation rested upon Mr. H. Irving, always careful and conscientious in portraying character. He rendered the pompous, shallow sentimentalism, the personal vanity, the sorry shiftiness, the "assumptiousness," as Mr. Beresford Hope would say, of the father of the "Two Roses" with excellent effect. The "Two Roses" are played by *Miss Fawsitt* and *Miss Newton*.

XXVIII.

"THE ROBUST INVALID."

[Adelphi Theatre.—June 1870.]

"THE Robust Invalid" is a free translation by Mr. Charles Reade of Molière's comedy of "*Le Malade Imaginaire*." The playbill announces the work as the "masterpiece" of its author; a statement which is at variance with general opinion in the matter, and passes some slight upon Molière's more famous plays. An excellent work of its class, "*Le Malade Imaginaire*" is of course of inferior merit to "*Tartuffe*," "*Le Misanthrope*," "*Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*," and other comedies.

"*Le Malade Imaginaire*" was first represented on the 10th of February 1673, at the Palais Royal Theatre. Molière died on the 17th, at the conclusion of the fourth performance of the comedy. He had been ailing for some time, had been urged not to exert himself, but he determined to play rather than disappoint the "*cinquante pauvres ouvriers*" who depended for their daily subsistence upon his efforts. While pronouncing the word *juro*, in the third *intermède*—one of those episodes of music, dancing, and pantomime which the stage of the time greatly prized—he was seized with a violent fit of coughing, and ruptured a blood-vessel. Carried home, he expired an hour afterwards, in the fifty-second year of his age. †

Molière's last comedy has frequently furnished materials to the British playwright. Mrs. Behn borrowed certain scenes from it to strengthen her unsavoury drama of "*Sir Patient Fancy*," produced at the Dorset Garden Theatre in 1678. "*The Mother-in-law; or, The Doctor the Disease*," a comedy attributed to the Rev. James Miller, and performed at the Haymarket in 1734, was also founded in great part upon "*Le Malade Imaginaire*," with an appropriation in addition of one of the characters in "*Monsieur de Pourceaugnac*." "*Doctor Last in his Chariot*," first played at the Haymarket in 1769, came nearer to a direct translation of

the original work. This was written by Isaac Bickerstaffe—who had already converted "Tartuffe" into "The Hypocrite," with the aid of Cibber's earlier version, "The Non-juror"—and was enriched with new scenes by Samuel Foote. *Doctor Last*—a cobbler, who had turned quack—was indeed one of the characters in Foote's satirical play of "The Devil on Two Sticks," and, represented by Weston, a comedian famous for his *Jerry Sneak*, had been received with great favour by the town. A portrait of Weston in the character of *Doctor Last* was painted by Zoffany, and the actor was long identified with the part. Long after "The Devil on Two Sticks" had as a complete work vanished from the theatre, the scenes in which *Doctor Last* is concerned yet lingered as a farcical interlude, assured of applause when a broadly comic actor sustained the chief part. Bickerstaffe combined the characters of *Diafoirus* and his son, and assigned their share in the dialogue and the plot to *Doctor Last*; further, he introduced *Wag*, a common servant played by Bannister, and intrusted him with the impersonation of the mock-doctor in the last act, the occupation falling to *Toinette* in the original play. Foote himself played *Ailwould*, the hypochondriacal hero, and probably the consultation of the physicians *Coffin*, *Skeleton*, and *Bulruddery*—a very comic scene—is of his providing. "Doctor Last in his Chariot" was only played six times; and though occasionally revived after its first season, would not seem to have achieved any great success. It disappeared from the theatre many years since.

"The Robust Invalid" is a far more faithful rendering of Molière's comedy than the English stage has hitherto known, and altogether conveys a fair idea of the humour and spirit of the work. All the characters are preserved, and allowed to retain their original names. The intermèdes are of course dispensed with: that these strange scenes, devoted to the feats of Polichinelle, the songs of Flora, the dances of the Zephyrs, and the eccentricities of Egyptians, blackamoors, and apes should ever have been suffered to interrupt the progress of a work of genuine dramatic art seems now inexplicable. The saltimbanque element prevailed greatly, however, on the comic stage of France during the seventeenth century. At the Adelphi the prescriptions

of the Parisian stage are observed, the drop-curtain does not fall during the performance, a brief orchestral interlude notifying the division of the play into acts. The dialogue has been generally condensed, allowing here and there for an expansion, not always quite judicious, of certain of the scenes, the quarrel between the brothers *Argan* and *Beralde* in the last act, though of merit in its way, being an instance of indiscreet interpolation on the adapter's part; and the "business" is a reproduction of the traditions—necessarily much softened down in certain parts—of the French theatre. The translation, upon the whole, is bright and vigorous, and the representation appeared to afford great entertainment to a select audience. The company is not very strong, and the scenery and stage-fittings are far from appropriate to the Molière period. A more liberal and tasteful scale of decoration would certainly have much benefited the presentment of the play. Mr. Vining's humour is of a harsh kind, but he sustains the part of *Argan* in a most painstaking fashion and with unflagging animation. He is well seconded by Mrs. Seymour, who has returned to the stage after a long absence to appear as *Toinette*, and portrays that inimitable servant with good effect. Miss Glover is a tolerable *Angélique*, and the child *Louison* is played cleverly, if with too obvious artifice, by Miss Florence Terry, who is new to the stage, and is a sister of the well-known actresses Miss Kate and Miss Ellen Terry. *Dr. Diafoirus* and his son *Thomas* are represented humorously enough by Mr. Pearce and Mr. Worboys.

XXIX.

"THE PALACE OF TRUTH."

[Haymarket Theatre.—November 1870.]

A MAIN portion of the plot of Mr. W. Gilbert's "fairy comedy" has avowedly been derived from a story by M^{de}. de Genlis, whose works, extending to eighty-four volumes, cannot perhaps boast very many readers now-a-days. The "Palace of Truth" is an enchanted edifice,

the occupants of which are constrained unconsciously to express aloud their thoughts, however unworthy these may be or inconvenient the occasion for giving them utterance. *King Phanor* and his *Queen Altemire* are the only persons acquainted with the magical properties of the palace, the *King* himself being protected from its influence in right of his possessing a crystal talisman of peculiar power. With a view of testing the fidelity of his adherents, *Phanor* adjourns his Court for twelve hours to the scene of enchantment. The brief reign of absolute candour that ensues constitutes the humour and the gist of the play. The *Queen* passes the ordeal successfully; she is a good, wifely lady, whose only faults are a certain quickness of temper and a tendency to jealousy, not without reasonable excuse, however. The *Princess Zeolide*, who had been deemed a coy and somewhat cold maiden, demonstrates a passionate affection for *Prince Philamir*, while the *Prince*, who had passed for being a very ardent lover, proves himself a selfish and heartless coxcomb. Various courtiers unwittingly unmask themselves: a pretentious musician is seen to be an utter impostor, a cynic appears in an unexpectedly genial light, and one who had posed as a hero is shown to be a servile poltroon. The *King* himself, unluckily losing his talisman, is also brought to confession; he is in truth quite a *Don Giovanni* of a husband, and pours into the ears of his enraged spouse a profuse avowal of his infidelities. *Azéma*, a maid of honour, whose character had seemed most irreproachable, still preserving extreme staidness of port, is proved by her own testimony to be a scheming coquette of a very pronounced kind. The *Lady Mirza*, the friend and confidant of the *Princess*, alone defies the magical influence of the palace. It subsequently appears that she has stolen from the *King* his talisman, and losing this, by-and-by she in her turn unfolds herself, and is found guilty of various misdemeanours. The accidental breaking of the talisman finally dissolves the spell. A reconciliation is arranged between the *Prince* and *Princess*, and the play concludes presumably with the moral that in the interests of society it is inexpedient that the strict truth should be always told.

Although the scenes in the palace are sufficiently divert-

ing and theatrically effective, the foundation of the play hardly bears the structure raised upon it. The first act is merely introductory, and secures but indifferent attention from the audience, while the closing scenes suffer from prolongation after the leading idea of the drama has been thoroughly explored and exhausted. The author has failed to provide for the humours of his palace the setting of a story of dramatic interest. Sympathy does not attach to the loves of the *Prince* and *Princess*, seeing that *Philamir* is about as worthless a lover as well could be. He is made to confess that he woos *Zeolide* but to gratify his vanity, and he transfers his attentions from one lady to another with most shameful promptitude. The work suffers from the air of dilution which attends it, and the suspicion it conveys of over-laborious dealing with a matter in itself of but trivial character. The dialogue is written in blank verse of a fairly flowing kind, if unendowed with any specially poetic qualities. In comparison with any existing entertainments of a burlesque nature, no doubt the merits of the new production are supreme: but it is not, apparently, the author's design that his play should be remitted to this category. He has aimed at the dignity of comedy, notwithstanding the basis of enchantment upon which his fable rests. The work more nearly approaches the early extravaganzas of Mr. Planché—when he depended little upon musical or scenical assistance—than any later achievements of the stage. Puns, rhymes, and slang, however, are excluded from "The Palace of Truth." Its literary value may be admitted, while, at the same time, its dramatic deficiencies may account for its imperfect hold upon popular regard.

The characters appear in that mediæval costume which is generally viewed as appropriate to stories in which the fairy element has any share. No clue is otherwise afforded to the period to which the events of the play are supposed to pertain. Seeing, however, that the fable is of sophisticated character removed from the honest simplicity of nursery lore, is of artificial constitution and strongly flavoured with modern cynicism, it might have been preferable to adopt for the *dramatis personæ* something of that courtly conventional dress of the last century which Mr.

Planché often favoured in his modernised renderings of fairy stories. Mediæval attire carries with it romantic and chivalric suggestions which are inimical to the gross self-seeking sentiments of the characters in "The Palace of Truth." The acting of the play was altogether of a commendable kind. Mr. Buckstone, although much hampered by the requirements of speech in blank verse, was irresistibly humorous as *King Phanor*; and Mrs. Chippendale was seen to advantage in the part of the *Queen*. The *Prince* and *Princess* were very well represented by Mr. Kendal and Miss Robertson. Miss Caroline Hill played the unscrupulous *Lady Mirza* with much spirit; and Miss Gwynne gave excellent effect to the part of the scheming coquette *Azéma*. The lines entrusted to *Chrysal*, the complimentary courtier, were delivered with much art and intelligence by Mr. Everill.

XXX.

"TWO THORNS."

[St. James's Theatre.—March 1871.]

MR. ALBERY has aimed, it would seem, at the construction of a comedy of the "London Assurance" pattern. With the aid of lively dialogue, abundance of incidents, and much stir and action of a farcical kind, he has sought to dispense with the genuine dramatic interest arising from a coherent fable, and to renounce all pretensions to the truthful and natural. He depicts a condition of life and society that away from the stage has no existence. His characters are quite unreal creatures, while they are not drawn with the skill and force distinguishing the *dramatis personæ* of Mr. Boucicault's notable work. Factitious as these are, their effectiveness as theatrical figures is not to be questioned. Mr. Albery's story deals with a complicated intrigue which, while it greatly perplexes the audience, fails to rouse their interest to any great extent. The hero of the play is a *Mr Arthur Minton*, a member of the mercantile house of

Parkhouse, Minton, and Curling. All the partners in the firm are brought upon the scene, mainly to demonstrate that their affairs are carried on without the presence of any of them being required at their place of business. *Mr. Minton* has married an actress, who, unknown to him, had been at one time an object of not very honest affection to the junior member of his firm—*Mr. Bates Curling*. During the absence of her husband upon an electioneering visit to a distant borough, the conduct of *Mrs. Minton* has been, to say the least of it, curiously indiscreet. She has gone to theatres and balls with a young stranger whose appearance entitles him to the appellation of “Handsome Jones,” and has invited the gentleman to her husband’s country house; moreover, she is apt at bestowing kisses upon two elderly admirers—*Sir Kidd Parkhouse* and *Lord Leyton de Lay*. “Handsome Jones” is not hindered by the fact of the lady’s marriage from assuming towards her the attitude of an ardent lover. *Mr. Bates Curling*, who is the villain of the story, does his best to stimulate the jealousy of his partner *Minton* in regard to the proceedings of *Jones*. But if *Mrs. Minton* has misbehaved as a wife, she has still more erred as a daughter. For long years she has abandoned her father, an old-fashioned tragedian, whom a long course of brandy-and-water and blank verse has reduced to a very destitute and pitiable state. She has concealed from her husband the fact of the veteran actor’s existence, and upon his presenting himself to her, incited to that step by the malignant *Mr. Curling*, she accords him the most freezing of receptions. In the end it appears that *Mr. Minton* has been throughout well acquainted with his father-in-law, *Mr. Adolphus Norman Bowles*, and has done much by bestowing all kinds of benefits upon him to improve his moral and social condition; and it is shown that “Handsome Jones’s” conduct, however foolish, is not materially reprehensible. He proves to be the son of *Lord Leyton de Lay*, and he is ultimately united to *Fanny*, daughter of *Sir Kidd Parkhouse*, the senior partner in *Mr. Minton’s* firm. Further the play is supplied with another pair of lovers in the persons of *Lilian*, the daughter of *Mr. Minton* by an earlier marriage, and *Frank Parkhouse*, the son of *Sir Kidd*. The constant

inebriety of *Sir Kidd* and his repetition of the catch-phrase of "the respectability of the family," the pompous demeanour of *Lord Leyton de Lay*, and the iniquities of a butler called *Rogers*, who, urged only by a love of mischief, is prone to send anonymous letters of an offensive nature to various persons and to imitate all kinds of handwriting, add to the length if they do not much increase the strength of a story inherently lacking dramatic value.

Still with all its deficiencies as a work of art, and its outrageousness as a picture of life and manners, "Two Thorns" was found to be tolerably effective in representation. It will not enhance, but it may not practically detract much from, Mr. Albery's fame as a dramatist. The dialogue is for the most part spirited and humorous, although the author is apt to over-elaborate his jokes and to preconcert too obviously his repartees. Certain of his figures of speech are too intricate to be readily intelligible, and here and there his allusions lack refinement. It is surely not worth the while of a playwright possessing genuine wit to purchase laughter by a recourse to expressions of an equivocal kind.

The representation gained much by the care and adroitness of Mr. W. Farren in the part of *Arthur Minton*. The actor happily combined ease of manner with due impressiveness of delivery, and has not for some time displayed his histrionic skill and cultivation to such good purpose. Mrs. Vezin played the actress wife with force and animation, but the part runs somewhat counter to general sympathy, and demands at the hands of its representative peculiar endowments of a personal kind to countervail its intrinsic unpleasantness. The *Lady Gay Spankers* of the stage—and *Mrs. Minton* is a *Lady Gay*, who has to be excused for heartlessness as well as for boisterously high spirits—are just now sadly in want of an adequate interpreter. The part of the old actor *Bowles* is sustained by Mr. Marston with elocutionary efficiency, but without much regard for the humour which seems to be essential to the character. *Mr. Bowles* is a toper as well as a player; but Mr. Marston subordinated his errors of intemperance to his theatrical merits. There was thus less apology than there should have been for *Mrs. Minton's* neglect of her parent. The other characters are

of minor significance. Mr. Lionel Brough was amusing, after rather a mannered fashion, as *Sir Kidd Parkhouse*, and Mr. Lin Rayne fairly met the requirements of the part of "Handsome Jones." Mr. Young failed to invest the malicious *Bates Curling* with much vitality. Miss Brough brought graceful bearing and good looks to the part of *Fanny Parkhouse*.

XXXI.

"BLACK-EYED SUSAN."

[Holborn Theatre.—March 1871.]

THERE can hardly exist a theatre of any standing in the United Kingdom which has not at some time or other found Douglas Jerrold's "Black-Eyed Susan" occupying its boards. Originally produced at the Surrey Theatre in 1829, and subsequently transferred to Covent Garden, the play forthwith attained an enduring popularity of an almost unexampled kind. Mr. T. P. Cooke, the first *William*, retained undisputed possession of that character throughout an unusually prolonged histrionic career. With the weight of more than threescore and ten years upon his shoulders the veteran player was yet true to himself, and to the method of representation he had founded; he sang his songs, spun his yarns, wielded his cutlass, and executed the most arduous of hornpipes with amazing energy. By the terms of his will he even endeavoured to provide posterity with a supply of stage sailors of his own pattern, and a sequence of nautical dramas of the class he had been accustomed to appear in. For some unexplained reasons the intentions of the testator in this respect have undergone discomfiture. Five or six years ago the "T. P. Cooke Prize" was awarded to a drama produced at the Surrey Theatre; the work was of a creditable nature, but as it dealt with the events of Queen Elizabeth's time in relation to the Spanish Armada, it could hardly be considered as strictly in accord with the spirit of the deceased

actor's directions and desires. No other prize drama has since appeared, and the curious are fairly entitled to inquire concerning the disposition of the fund placed in the hands of the trustees for a specific purpose by the original *William* of Jerrold's play.

No doubt it was not foreseen that the nautical drama could possibly become a thing of the past, and that the sailor, as a representative of romance, daring, and adventure, could ever lose his hold of popular regard. But for the last half century the fleet has been "laid up in dock" as regards providing material for the producer of plays and novels. The sailor, as a hero available for the purposes of fiction is a creature of the old great wars. Recent history has done little to renew or to invigorate public interest in his character, peculiarities, and achievements. Stories in which such personages as *Poor Jack*, *Tom Cringle*, *Midshipman Easy*, and *Long Tom Coffin* prominently figure have long since ceased to appear. It is not surprising therefore that "Black-Eyed Susan" should now fail to command the measure of faith and cordial sympathy with which it was wont to be greeted. It seems old beyond its years. The spectator is constrained to doubt the truth of its colouring and the accuracy of its drawing. Did sailors ever talk as William does, with that profuse indulgence in metaphors and figures of speech drawn from a sea-life? Would the admiral, president of a court-martial, after sentencing a prisoner to death promptly proceed to shake hands with him? Unfortunately, too, the modern burlesque writer, who touches nothing he does not sully, has laboured hard to undermine public belief in matters of this kind and to pervert them to comic uses. Still, after all allowance has been made on this head, the play possesses a substratum of genuine interest sufficient to win respect and attention even in these times. Constructed after a somewhat straggling fashion, involving frequent change of scene and that awkward and noisy conjunction of "flats" which in more modern works it is held advisable to dispense with as much as possible, "Black-Eyed Susan" is yet rich in dramatic situations and pathetic passages irresistible in their effect. Few dramatists have produced anything more adroitly touching than the parting interview between *William*

and his wife. The simple sentiment and natural feeling of the scene succeed in moving the audience of the Holborn not less genuinely and thoroughly than they stirred the patrons of the Surrey forty years ago. Moreover, the play is throughout written with a literary ability exceedingly rare in works of its class.

The representation at the Holborn is upon the whole entitled to commendation. Mr. G. Rignold, who appears as *William*, has a good voice and an appropriate presence, and is in addition well versed in the traditions of the part. He lacks, however, the skill in attitude and gesture of the original *William*. Mr. T. P. Cooke was a noted pantomimist, much distinguished for his performance of such characters as the *Monster* in "Frankenstein," the *Vampire*, and *Vanderdecken*, in which personations speech was rarely permitted to the actor. Further, it may be noted that he greatly commanded the regard of his audience from the fact that he had really seen active service as a sailor, and delighted to disport a medal obtained by him in that capacity. He had been present at the blockade of Toulon, had served under Earl St. Vincent in the action which won that commander his peerage, and had been publicly thanked by his captain for the courage he exhibited in boarding an Algerine corsair. But of course sterling claims to favour of this kind cannot fall to the lot of every stage sailor. Mr. Rignold excited much applause by his exertions. *Susan* is played with grace and feeling by Miss Jane Rignold, and Mr. F. Robson portrayed with sufficient humour the eccentricities of *Jacob Twigg*, the lawyer's clerk. The main defects of the performance consisted in the fancy of the minor actors for enriching their speeches with facetious utterances of their own invention, heedless of the fact that Jerrold's dialogue, always animated and often very witty, stands in no need whatever of assistance of this kind.

XXXII.

"JOAN OF ARC."

[Queen's Theatre.—April 1871.]

MR. TOM TAYLOR's new historical tragedy in five acts, has been obviously devised with a view to its heroine being impersonated by Mrs. Rousby, the actress to whom "Twixt Axe and Crown," by the same author, owed so large a share of its success. It is the privilege or the fate of popular performers to have parts expressly furnished them according to measure, and generally with an implied stipulation that none of their companions shall be quite so adroitly or so attractively suited. Otherwise the necessity for a new setting of the story of Joan of Arc is not very manifest. Again and again has *Joan* been pressed into the service of the theatre. She has figured in tragedy, melodrama, opera, and even—or perhaps we should rather say of course—in burlesque. The First Part of Henry VI. seems to have been played but once (in 1738) since the Restoration; and certainly the view taken of *La Pucelle* in that work would not now be tolerated. It is to be said, however, that Shakespeare's share in the three plays of Henry VI. has not been clearly ascertained, and that in any case his histories were avowedly based upon national chronicles and traditions, in which popular prejudices and antipathies were too abundantly contained to be disregarded or overruled by a dramatist. Moreover, it was reserved for a French author to inflict a far more cruel attack upon the character of *Joan*, although no one reads now and no one need wish to read Voltaire's infamous poem. Upwards of thirty years ago, when Mr. Bunn and Mr. Macready were rival managers, there were rival "Joans" at Drury Lane and Covent Garden: the one an opera by Mr. Balfe and Mr. Fitzball; the other a melodrama by Mr. Serle, in which the tragic actress, Miss Huddart, better known as Mrs. Warner, greatly distinguished herself as the heroine. And it was only the other day that Mdle. Patti donned

armour, waved her sword, and delighted a Parisian audience by appearing as *Giovanna d'Arco* in an Italian opera so designated. Schiller's famous "*Jungfrau von Orleans*" is not known to the English stage, and if it was indispensable that a new *Joan* should confront the footlights there would have been good excuse for attempting an adaptation of the great German play. It is of prodigious length, but its poetic quality and dramatic force are not to be denied, while it contains many characters of distinct histrionic value. Probably this was the hindrance to its being resorted to by Mr. Taylor on the present occasion. It has been his object apparently to contrive a play in which *Joan* shall stand alone, or as a central figure round which the other characters are permitted to group themselves, with a proviso that they pretend to no kind of individuality or independent action. Mrs. Rousby and a swarm of supernumeraries thus represent the persons of the new tragedy. The leading historical personages of the time are suppressed in the most summary fashion. The brave *Dunois*, the bastard of Orleans, becomes a mute; the *Dukes of Bedford* and *Burgundy*, the "*valiant Lord Talbot, Earl of Shrewsbury*," make no sign; *Agnès Sorel* is absent, her place in the story being dimly filled by *Marie of Anjou*, the Queen of *Charles VII.* But if there is little occupation for the other characters in the play, the heroine is required to undergo a measure of toil that is certainly excessive, and from the point of view of the audience a monopolist heroine is to be deprecated even though she may be personated by the most popular of actresses.

Mr. Taylor's five acts each bear separate titles, carefully alliterative—"The Maid Mystic," "The Maid Missionary," "The Maid Militant," "The Maid Manifest," and "The Maid Martyr," and the acts are frequently subdivided by the fall of a curtain, distinct from the act-drop, to give time to the stage carpenters for the arrangement of scenic effects. A series of chapters from the story of *Joan's* life are set before the audience with little attempt at the construction of a regular plot. At no time indeed in the course of the performance is any situation of genuine dramatic worth arrived at. Such interest as the play awakened was of the kind that pertains to a picture-book.

rather than to a legitimate theatrical exhibition. The language is lofty if the thoughts are commonplace, the tragedy being written in blank verse throughout, blank verse having now come to be regarded as a sort of stage "heal-all," and its application even to burlesque being held in some strange way to bestow dignity and ensure wholesomeness. The play now soars and now sinks, the dramatist even condescending to seek applause by such poor artifices as were the staple entertainments of Astley's theatre in times when "hippodrama" flourished. Mrs. Rousby strides a real horse, lime lights glare, red fire glows, broadsword combats abound, and the characters strike attitudes as the drop falls upon a tableau of "The Taking of the Tourelles." The first act is by far the best, the play degenerating lamentably as it proceeds. *Joan's* long speeches are monotonous in character and a severe tax upon patience. The scene of the coronation in the Cathedral of Rheims is a brilliant display of pageantry, but it offended certain of the more scrupulous of the spectators in that its imitation of the rites of the Latin Church approached too nearly the irreverent. In the last act, after an exposure of the rack and some rough handling of *Joan* by the sworn tormentors, she is shown tied to a stake in the market place of Rouen. Then comes one of those triumphs of realism, in which the modern stage is so fertile, revolting to some but vastly attractive to many. The faggots are lighted at the feet of the victim, a blaze of fireworks surrounding her, and she is supposed to be burned to death in the sight of the spectators. It is fair to say, however, that this exhibition provoked a considerable amount of disapprobation. Afterwards, for those who remained in the theatre to see it, a supplementary scene was provided, showing the soaring to Heaven of *Joan* in the arms of angels, after a fashion with which the stage has been for many years familiar. Altogether the play, with all its pretensions, is a dreary production, and its reception was far from enthusiastic. If it is to live at all, it will probably be on account of its gorgeousness as a spectacle. The scenery and costumes are of unusual costliness and elegance.

To the part of the heroine Mrs. Rousby brings a graceful

presence, a fine voice, and unflagging energy; but her acting lacks dignity, and she is especially deficient in conveying the rapt devotional air, the sense of fervid belief in the sanctity of her mission, which should surely characterise *Joan*. In the second act, for some inexplicable reason, unless it be an anxiety for premature emancipation from the skirts of her sex, she appears dressed as a male peasant, and thus scantily clad is presented to the King, who, to do him justice, conceals very well the surprise he might reasonably have felt at his visitor's strangeness of costume. Attired in a suit of armour and wearing a plumed helmet, Mrs. Rousby smiles and trips about the stage with the sprightly manners of the young ladies who are accustomed to appear as handsome young princes in fairy plays. Upon the whole, however, the actress laboured zealously to support the severe burthen the dramatist had cast upon her. Mr. Rousby played the small part of *La Hire*—not the chivalrous knight of Schiller's play, but a rather comic captain of mercenaries, who, in one of the most serious scenes in the play, is required to excite laughter by hurling a spy down a well. Mr. Rousby acted with creditable skill.

XXXIII.

"DAISY FARM."

[Olympic Theatre.—May 1871.]

DAISY FARM is what auctioneers are accustomed to describe as an "eligible property," situate in the picturesque neighbourhood of Bakewell, Derbyshire, and occupied by a sturdy yeoman of middle age, named *Andrew Armstrong*. A certain *Captain Craven*, a retired Indian officer, with a view to the recruiting of his health and the enjoyment of a season of ease and quiet after many years of active service, has become lodger and boarder in the house of *Mr. Armstrong*. The *Captain*, however, is doomed to serious disappointment in regard to his hopes of repose, and the playgoers who anticipated from a drama called "*Daisy Farm*" a story

of a placid and pastoral character are speedily undeceived. The farmhouse becomes the scene of a series of the most painful events. The farmer has laid out more money upon improving his land than he could well afford, and has thus placed himself much in the power of one *Simeon Cole*, a grasping and usurious neighbour. Further, *Mr. Armstrong's* stepson, *Charley Burridge*, a medical student of dissipated habits, has quitted London for Derbyshire, in consequence of his having embezzled the money of the practitioner to whom he had been apprenticed. Additional troubles are in store for the unhappy *Mr. Armstrong*. At the time of his union with *Mrs. Burridge*, the mother of *Charley*, he of course believed her to be a widow—it was generally understood, indeed, that her first husband had been lost at sea many years previously. On the stage, however, "lost at sea" almost invariably involves coming to life again. Accordingly a ragged tramp suddenly appears upon the scene, and proclaims himself the lawful husband of the lady passing as the wife of *Andrew Armstrong*. At once, therefore, the farmer finds himself inconveniently in debt, his stepson a thief, and his wife a bigamist. Naturally he is almost maddened by these grievous trials. To gain time for reflection, and to be rid of the shameful presence of the tramp, he hands the man a large sum of money that had been saved to meet the claims of *Simeon Cole*. The tramp departs with his hush-money, and incontinently proceeds to intoxicate himself at the nearest public-house. Here flourishing about his bank-notes with drunken ingenuousness, he is discovered by *Charley Burridge*, now at his wits' ends to find means to replace the money he had stolen in London. He had vainly sought a loan of *Captain Craven*, and had even been audaciously mean enough to propose, by way of consideration for the advance, to resign to that officer his claims upon the hand of a young lady to whom he had been some years engaged, and upon whom the *Captain* had bestowed attentions of a more or less tender kind. *Charley* follows the tramp, waylays and robs him, and, after a prolonged struggle, hurls him over a precipice called "The Lovers' Leap," on the cliffs overlooking the Bakewell Road. Neither the robber nor his victim is aware that they presumably occupy towards each other the position of father

and son. Meantime *Mr. Armstrong* prepares to quit his farm and the innocent bigamist his wife, to whom he is devotedly attached. But the hint of his departure brings down upon him the claim of *Simeon Cole* for an immediate payment of the amount due to him. *Armstrong* is in imminent peril of arrest and imprisonment. Moved by remorse, *Charley* resolves to sacrifice himself to save his stepfather, and forthwith satisfies *Cole's* demand by handing him the bank-notes stolen from the tramp. Thereupon the robber is acquitted of the charge of murder, at anyrate, for the tramp reappears, a trifle bruised and scratched, but not otherwise much the worse for his fall from the cliff. But how is *Mrs. Armstrong* to be relieved of the odium of bigamy? Opportunely *Captain Craven* discovers that the man affecting to be the late *Mr. Burridge* is in truth no such person, although strangely resembling him. The tramp's real name is *Richard White*, and he is a deserter from the *Captain's* regiment. In this respect therefore tranquillity is restored to Daisy Farm. Further, the *Captain* generously undertakes to make good the amount of *Charley Burridge's* defalcations in town upon condition that the misguided youth is promptly despatched to one of the colonies. Transportation is no longer a legal punishment, but in the theatre compulsory emigration is still found to be a convenient method of disposing of reprobates. The curtain falls, therefore, upon a picture of comparative happiness, with an implied probability that the *Captain* will find a reward for his good services in the affections of the young lady whose engagement to marry him *Charley Burridge* had held so cheaply and merited so indifferently.

Mr. Byron's play was completely successful. It is not, of course, a work of pretension or of any particular value, but it is constructed with closeness and skill; the interest is well sustained, and situations of a genuinely dramatic kind are abundantly provided. The materials are not very new, but they are adroitly manipulated, and the audience appeared to follow the gradual development of the fable with much curiosity and sympathy. The dialogue is sufficiently animated, but suffers here and there from the author's wanton disregard of all relevancy in his recourse to jokes and witticisms, and even puns, old and new. Mr.

Byron himself appears as *Captain Craven*, and although his acting is rather mannered, he fully satisfied his audience, and did justice, it may be presumed, to his own conception of the character. It is not until late in the story that the *Captain* is assigned much occupation of importance. He is through many scenes a kind of walking gentleman charged to act as chorus, and to interpret or comment upon the actions and emotions of his playfellows. He tempers with epigram the criminal nature of the plot, and soothes with jests its more melodramatic emergencies. In other respects the play was well represented. Mr. Belmore displayed much energy and homely pathos as *Andrew Armstrong*, and the profligate medical student was effectively personated by Mr. Warner. Miss Hughes appeared as *Mrs. Armstrong*, and the part of the tramp was forcibly sustained by Mr. John Carter, an actor new to the Olympic stage. A pair of comic farm servants, who make love to each other with most unsophisticated candour, supply Mrs. Liston and Mr. E. Garden with repeated opportunities of stirring the laughter of the audience.

XXXIV.

"FANCHETTE."

[Lyceum Theatre.—September 1871.]

"FANCHETTE, the Will o' the Wisp," is avowedly derived from Mdme. Birch Pfeiffer's adaptation to the German stage of Mdme. George Sand's novelette, "*La Petite Fadette*." A dramatic rendering of this work was presented some five years ago at the Olympic Theatre; the play was then called the "*Grasshopper*," and was the means of introducing "the Sisters Webb" to an English audience. But the "*Grasshopper*" and the actresses alike failed to make any great impression, and after a brief period vanished together from London. Stage versions of "*La Petite Fadette*" have, however, won triumphs in America, and Mr. Bateman, the new *impresario* of the Lyceum Theatre,

has thought it worth while to commence his campaign as a metropolitan manager with another attempt to convert to theatrical uses the prettiest of Breton stories. This proceeding says perhaps more for his courage than for his judgment.

No pains have been spared in the way of bettering the good chances of the new venture. "Characteristic Breton music" has been expressly composed by Mr. Edward Silas; new Breton costumes have been supplied of quite unimpeachable picturesqueness; the scenery provided by Messrs. Craven and Cuthbert is of excellent quality; and a meritorious troop of actors has been engaged. The accessories, indeed, are all that could be wished; the deficiency is in the substance. As a play, "*La Petite Fadette*" could only be accepted by an audience predisposed to value the idyllic above the dramatic. Its presence on the stage perhaps is due to a prevalent delusion that the story, delightful to read, must of necessity be theatrically effective. And then it has to be considered that the literary art and grace of the original are lost in the process of translation; the present version being especially noticeable for its flat and poverty-stricken English. The poetry of the subject remains; but this fails to assert itself on the stage. Nor is it to be expected that the most faithful reflection of Breton peasant life and character will greatly stir the sympathies or win the admiration of a general audience. At best "*Fanchette*" only provides a showy part for a young actress whose probabilities of obtaining distinction are supposed to be enhanced by the fact that her play-fellows are denied any chance of shining.

The theme is of the slightest kind. It is indeed little more than a transfer of the farce of "*Good for Nothing*" to a Breton site, and so elaborating and protracting it as to occupy four acts. The civilising and refining influences of love are set forth as in "*Cymon and Iphigenia*." *Fanchette*, a young girl who lives in a wretched hovel with her grandmother *La Mère Fadet*, a reputed witch, is induced by her affection for *Landry Barbeau*, a handsome peasant, to reform the squalor of her life, to assume a comely aspect, and to become a respectable member of society. *Landry*, then, in his turn, loves *Fanchette*, jilting for her sake his

former mistress, *Madelon*, "the belle of La Priche." *Barbeau*, a rich farmer, the father of *Landry*, objects to his son's marriage with one so poorly provided for as *Fanchette*. But *Father Barbeau's* scruples presently disappear upon the discovery that *La Mère Fadet* has died, leaving a handsome fortune to her grandchild. Moreover, the marriage of *Landry* and *Fanchette* is found to be a convenient method of condoning certain injuries of an obscure but grave nature, which in times long past have been inflicted upon the *Fadet* family by some near relative of *Father Barbeau*. So the curtain is allowed ultimately to descend upon the union of the lovers, leaving unsolved a difficulty that has ensued from *Landry's* drawing an unlucky number, and being therefore bound to serve his country as a conscript. *Madelon*, the village beauty, appears at intervals throughout the play, but small interest attaches to her movements, and she at no time acquires much vitality. A comic character, whose claims to be entertaining, however, are ineffectual enough, is provided in the person of *Sylvinet*, the brother of *Landry*, who follows at a distance the example of that more prosperous suitor, and, like him, first pays court to *Madelon*, and then woos *Fanchette*. But *Sylvinet* is left in the end disconsolate, the victim of unstable and unrequited affection. The audience are permitted to assume that he joins the army in his brother's stead.

Fanchette is represented by Miss Isabel Bateman, the daughter of the manager, an actress possessed of all the confidence which should come of skill and practice, but whose art is at present in a very crude and undisciplined condition. The gaiety of *Fanchette's* earlier scenes lacked spontaneity and ease, while the graver passages of the part failed to impress from their deficiency in pathetic expression. Miss Bateman appears to be much more able to display force than to depict feeling. Her elocutionary method is faulty, and she adopts the monotonous delivery and the drawling pronunciation of particular words which would seem to be established mannerisms of the American theatre. Possibly in some less ambitious character the lady may by-and-by more successfully assert her claims to be accounted an actress of value. Of the other characters

in the drama little was demanded beyond their promenading the stage in Breton costumes and taking part in numerous prolonged and rather vapid conversations. Mr. Irving was a picturesque figure as *Landry Barbeau*, but the part is a thankless one, and far removed from the ordinary range of the actor's impersonations. Certain of the love scenes, however, in which *Landry* appears were skilfully and feelingly rendered. Mr. Addison did all that was possible with the character of *Father Barbeau*, and sought by strength of colouring to supply its lack of firm outline. Mr. Belmore toiled sedulously to invest the shadowy *Sylvinet* with some show of comic substance, but the task was not to be accomplished. The actor's manner was humorous, but the speeches he was required to deliver were no laughing matter. *La Mère Fadet* is only the conventional crone of the stage—bound to thump her crutch frequently upon the boards and shriek with painful vehemence imprecations and menaces at the other characters. Miss Pauncefort sufficiently met these physical requirements of the part.

The reception of the play was not much wanting in enthusiasm; but the enduring success of "*Fanchette*" is hardly to be looked for. A first night's applause is but as the firing of blank cartridges. Considerable noise ensues, but there is no other appreciable result. The drama's prospects depend almost altogether upon its completeness as a sort of pastoral spectacle.

XXXV.

"APPLE BLOSSOMS."

[Vaudeville Theatre.—September 1871.]

THE fable of Mr. Albery's new comedy of "*Apple Blossoms*" deals mainly with a quarrel arising between a certain *Captain Penryn* and his son *Tom*, in consequence of the younger gentleman's obstinate affection for a mistress much his inferior in social position. *Tom* is the owner of a yacht,

and is constantly haunting a village on the Cornish coast, lured thither by the attractions of *Miss Jenny Prout*, the youthful mistress of the Apple Tree Inn. The *Captain*, a man of wealth and landed property, is blessed with a kindly heart, but afflicted with a most ungovernable temper. In short, he is the old-established irascible parent who has time out of mind figured on the scene, and without whose presence and support it would almost seem that the business of comedy could not be carried on. He does not trouble himself to consider the merits of *Miss Prout*, whose character, it should be said, is as irreproachable as her personal charms are undeniable—does not even seek an introduction to that young person; but, satisfied that his son meditates an unworthy step, commands him forthwith to abandon the object of his passion, to quit the Cornish coast for ever, and to take up his permanent abode in London. *Tom*, however, is contumacious, remains stubbornly true to his love, and is accordingly disinherited. He ships as a common seaman on board the *Neptune* man-of-war. The *Captain* falls ill at the Apple Tree Inn, and is for many months tenderly nursed by its hostess. Deeply sensible of her kindness, he determines to adopt *Miss Prout* as his daughter, being of course quite unconscious that she had ever aspired to be his daughter-in-law. *Tom*, moved by anxiety to see his father once more and to obtain an interview with *Jenny* on Christmas Eve, deserts his ship. *Captain Penryn* is still obdurate, and even hands over the fugitive to the officers of the *Neptune*, who have tracked him to the inn, bent on arresting him as a deserter. Towards the close of the play, increasing age and illness undermine the *Captain's* inflexibility. When *Tom* again presents himself—desperately wounded in a naval engagement of which history has taken no note—he is forgiven by his father, duly united to *Miss Prout*, and thus happily the play is allowed to conclude.

This is but a weak and trite subject, and the author has endeavoured to conceal its deficiencies in this respect by elaborately developing the subordinate characters of his drama, and by introducing a redundant supply of irrelevant incidents. He has not so much strengthened his theme,

however, as rendered its setting forth extremely tedious. The framework is still feeble and meagre, all its bandages and "paddings notwithstanding. There are hints of some sentimental mystery attending the origin of *Jenny Prout*, but the story of her parentage, though it occupied some time in narration, was never fairly comprehended by the audience. There is a comic one-eyed boatman, called ironically "Handsome Bill," but his mission in the drama is obscure. Another boatman is *Bob Prout*, the brother of *Jenny*, modelled apparently after *Ham Peggotty*, and provided with a jealous scene—the result of his wife's hiding *Tom Penryn* in a cupboard—such as *John Peerybingle* is permitted in the "Cricket on the Hearth." There is the usual portly widow, over-anxious for a new spouse. There is a kind-hearted lawyer, who has a foible for loading his pockets with purchases made in the streets, cigar-lights, toys, penny mousetraps, and cheap newspapers—wares readily obtainable in London, but hardly to be found vended out of doors in a Cornish village. Further, there is a travelling comic singer, "*The Great Baggs*," who delights in playing practical jokes and in slang witticisms, and whose proceedings are as wearisome and offensive on the stage as they could not fail to be in real life. The dramatist has probably been constrained to provide and to elaborate these characters with a view to their being filled by certain members of the Vaudeville company; but the trifling measure of interest stirred by the play pertains exclusively to the conduct of the *Penryns*, and the story of their troubles is too weak to bear much interruption or the weight of any quantity of extraneous matter. The reception of the comedy was of the usual wildly enthusiastic kind, but even after it has been subjected to the severest process of reduction and compression, including, of course, the rejection of the repulsive excesses of the *Great Baggs*, "*Apple Blossoms*" will remain a very inferior work to the "*Two Roses*," and cannot be expected to approach in any degree the popularity of that admired comedy.

Mr. Albery takes great pains with his dialogue, but he is much misled by his anxiety to be witty at all costs and on all occasions. Honest dulness would be often preferable

to so incessant a strain after brilliance. There is something painful about the spectacle of a man laboriously attitudinising as a wit, and yet continually failing to justify the pretensions of his position. For one of Mr. Albery's shafts that hit the mark ten go wide or fall short of it. And a jest that miscarries or fails in intelligibility is no more impressive than a damp firework. The characters in "Apple Blossoms" often thrust nature altogether on one side, and indulge in a fantastic and affected language that seems like a reproduction of the feats of diction of the euphuists. The lovers especially lose themselves in their search for new conceits and eccentric figures of speech. *Jenny Prout* is credited with a great fertility in "sweet thoughts;" but when she says she often thinks "the angels made the flowers, and that they smell of the fingers of the workmen," it becomes plain that her ideas are far from nice, or that she is talking nonsense. Mr. Albery must learn to discipline his abilities, to distinguish sham wit from genuine, and sickliness from sentiment. It is gratifying to find a dramatist studious of the literary side of his task, but in this new comedy industry appears too often wasted and ingenuity misapplied.

Mr. William Farren sustains the conventional part of *Captain Penryn* with the care and force which invariably mark his acting. Mr. James manifests much natural and unforced humour as *Bob Prout*, the boatman, and Mr. Thorne labours hard, but in vain, to make the *Great Baggs* amusing. It was certainly not the fault of the actor that his efforts were attended by results so depressing. *Tom Penryn* is at best but an insipid lover, and he does not gain in interest from Mr. Rayne's mincing method of elocution and affectations of demeanour. Miss Fawsitt appears as *Jenny*, but the part is overcharged to a fatiguing extent with effusiveness. Arch speeches and artless prattle should be discreetly employed to preserve unsuspected their power to charm. Mr. Stephens was pleasant and fairly life-like in the not very probable character of the comic lawyer.

XXXVI.

"HINKO."

[Queen's Theatre.—September 1871.]

MADAME BIRCH PFEIFFER's adaptation to the German stage of an historical novel by Ludwig Storch has avowedly furnished Mr. W. G. Wills with the theme of his new romantic play, in five acts and a prologue, called "Hinko." The English playwright, however, has supplied dialogue of his own, has developed the characters after an original fashion, altered the catastrophe, and added closing scenes that are altogether novel. Indeed, he has dealt so independently and absolutely with the German work, that he has almost deprived himself of excuse for resorting to it at all. Himself an inventive and ingenious story-teller, Mr. Wills can scarcely have been much attracted by so unlikely and inept a fable as that of "Hinko;" nor can it be supposed that the dramatic qualities of the foreign production are such as to defy competition or to compel diffidence on the part even of one but slightly practised in writing for the stage. For, in truth, "Hinko," in both its English and alien form, is of very faulty construction, and fully marked by all the deficiencies and oppressive redundances peculiar to plays originating in novels.

The events of the drama are supposed to occur in the city of Prague, about the year 1380, under the reign of King Wenzel or Wenceslaus, son of the Emperor Charles IV., and "surnamed the Savage," concerning whom, it may be remembered, Uncle Toby interrupted Corporal Trim in his vain attempts to tell the story of "The King of Bohemia and his Seven Castles." A certain rather ignoble young gentleman, believing that he has slain a citizen of Prague in a duel, and thereby incurred the penalty of death, elects to lead "a shamed life" as the apprentice or assistant of the executioner. His name is thereupon changed from *Henrico* to *Hinko*, and a career of infamy appears to be in store for him. As it happens, death has

not resulted from the duel, and *Hinko's* life was therefore scarcely in danger. The duel was indeed part of a conspiracy to destroy the youth, in order that his brother *Marquart* might obtain his inheritance. *Markitta*, the daughter of the headsman, has conceived a passion for *Hinko*, but this he does not reciprocate. His sacrifice of honour has been induced solely by self-love. *Steinhertz*, the headsman, who is of noble birth, and who fills his odious office by reason of his bitter misanthropic sentiments generated by family afflictions, kindly promises that the duties of his assistant shall be rendered as little repulsive to him as possible. *Hinko* remains therefore a member of the headsman's household, and presently attracts the favourable notice of his employer's frequent visitor, *King Wenzel*, an eccentric monarch, whose manners are those of *Caliban*, while his speeches seem borrowed from *Ancient Pistol*. The *King* is enamoured of the *Countess Blanka*, a lady of the Court, and appoints *Hinko* the bearer of love messages to her. But *Hinko* himself loves the lady, and has good reason to believe his affection requited. The *King* suddenly interrupts the lovers, and promptly decrees the death of *Hinko*. It is opportunely discovered, however, that *Wenzel* is but the child of the deceased burgomaster of Nurnberg, while *Hinko* is in truth the son of *Charles IV.* and the rightful King of Bohemia. For mysterious reasons the children have been changed at nurse after a fashion with which the stage has long been familiar. *Hinko*, who is certainly of an accommodating disposition, declines to accept the throne for the odd reason that the boor *Wenzel* has invariably conducted himself in a kingly way. Further, *Hinko*, renouncing his love for the *Countess Blanka*, and presumably resigning her also to *Wenzel*, transfers his affections to *Markitta*, and upon his union with the headsman's daughter, and the headsman's promise to retire from business into private life, the curtain falls.

It will be seen that this is a story of a wild, extravagant kind, often verging perilously upon the ludicrous. Moreover, it is inartistically stated upon the stage, it is unduly protracted and overcharged with episodic passages. The prologue is superfluous, and with a little exercise of ingenuity the incidents of the first three scenes might easily

have been comprised in one. The action of the last act flags and halts owing to the introduction of an excess of narrative matter. Throughout credibility is unfairly taxed, and, unfortunately, too much time is allowed to the audience to reflect upon the gross improbabilities of the story set before them. *Hinko* is a hero of a very unheroic type. The motives of his conduct debar him of the sympathies of the spectators. From their point of view he is in love with the wrong lady, and he preserves his life by unworthy means. *Markitta's* passion for him appears therefore somewhat unaccountable, and fails to awaken much interest. *Blanka* is but an inane walking lady splendidly costumed. The *King* seems to have stepped out of some exuberant burlesque. He even addresses his Court in the famous colloquial phrase of Mr. Planche's *Amoroso*, "King of Little Britain." *Wenzel*, however, proved himself decidedly a favourite with the audience, and his fierce looks, savage language, and extravagant gestures excited great amusement. The interest of the play culminates in the second act, when the cowardly hero resolves to become the headsman's assistant, and a situation of some dramatic force is arrived at. From this point the excitement gradually weakens, until it expires altogether some time before the fall of the curtain.

But though its defects are grave and numerous, the play claims attention on account of its literary merits, which are of a marked kind. It is written in nervous and sonorous blank verse, and contains many impressive and even noble lines. The author has succeeded in securing respect even for *Hinko's* faint-heartedness, owing to the eloquence of the terms in which this finds expression. Throughout, indeed, the play is so well written that its situations often acquire, by force of language, an interest and an effect which are hardly otherwise their legitimate possession. The earnestness of the treatment conceals the infirmity of the subject, and wards off ridicule from what it might be entitled to count as its fair prey. Escaping thus from being classed merely as a weak and patchy melodrama, "*Hinko*" may succeed in taking rank as a play of some pretensions, and obtain not undeserved popularity.

Mr. Vezin's physical resources are rather overtaxed by the arduous part of the hero, and his voice lacks the

requisite volume and variety of tone to sustain unfatigued declamatory speeches of great length and vehemence. Of intelligence and histrionic skill, however, the actor showed no deficiency. His harlequin's leap in the first act might advantageously be omitted. Mrs. Vezin invested with grace and feeling the unsatisfactory part of *Markitta*, and Mr. Ryder was a thoroughly effective headsman. Mr. Rignold fully met the requirements of the character of *King Wenzel*, and raged and fumed, roared and stamped with surprising and untiring energy. Mrs. Billington rendered vigorously the part of *Margaret Volkner*, the putative mother of *Hinko*; and Miss Rhodes, a new actress, was a fair representative of the uninteresting *Countess Blanka*.

XXXVII.

"EDMUND KEAN."

[Holborn Theatre.—September 1871.]

THE conversion of the French drama "Sullivan" into the English comedy "David Garrick" having found tolerance and even applause upon our stage, it has been thought advisable to try another experiment of the same kind. Accordingly a literal translation has been produced of Alexandre Dumas's "Kean, or Génie et Désordre," first presented at the Porte St. Martin Theatre in 1836.

The dramatist had probably seen the great actor during his visit to Paris in 1828, when he performed for a few nights at the Théâtre Français, under the special patronage of the Duke of Orleans, but, dissatisfied with his reception, precipitately abandoned his engagement. Further, Dumas was aware that Kean's private career was of an eccentric and reproachable character. Here his information would seem to have ended. Of English life and manners he at the time knew nothing; and indeed to the last he remained very imperfectly acquainted on this head. But he perceived that the little he knew of the story of Kean, treated after a fashion of his own, with fancy doing duty in the

absence of facts, would provide, at any rate, a fine part for Frédéric Lemaître, whose powers were then at their best. So "Kean" was written and obtained great success. The audiences of the Porte St. Martin were not more in earnest about truthfulness and accuracy than was their playwright. They were quite content to adopt his notions of an English story, especially as in the dramatic setting of it their favourite actor had been so well cared for. And, no doubt, Lemaître's *Kean* was very well worth seeing. He was young, handsome, his voice was superb, and he was able to give full effect to those strong contrasts of light and shade, those alternate fits of wild gaiety and bursts of violent passion, which were the characteristics of his style of acting. From an English point of view "Kean" is of course the most preposterous of plays. The hero is a compound of Don Giovanni, the Admirable Crichton, and some sort of "Corinthian Tom" of Parisian extraction, presuming such a creature to be conceivable. He drinks alternately raw brandy and eau sucrée. He boxes with a bargeman in the "Coal Hole Tavern," which the English scene-painter represents as situate on the Surrey side of the Thames, and commanding a fine view of Waterloo Bridge and St. Paul's Cathedral. He is loved by *Miss Alice Elton*, a young heiress, who desires to go upon the stage, confident that she will in a very short time be universally recognised as a second Mrs. Siddons. *Kean* lectures her upon the temptations of a theatrical career, and declines her offer to endow him with her enormous wealth. His dressing-room at Drury Lane Theatre is provided with sliding panels and secret passages, by means of which female members of the aristocracy obtain furtive access to him. He is in love with the *Lady Angela*, daughter of the Austrian ambassador, and finds to his great dismay that he has a rival in his intimate friend the *Prince of Wales*. Playing *Romeo*, he suddenly throws up his part to denounce from the stage the treacherous conduct of the *Prince*, who is sitting in a private box conversing with the *Lady Angela*. For this public outrage upon royalty he is doomed by King George III. to six months' imprisonment. Upon the intercession of the *Prince*, however, this sentence is commuted to banishment to America for one year. Moved by the generosity of

his rival, and moreover satisfied that though she had once encouraged his addresses the *Lady Angela* does not in truth reciprocate his ardour, *Kean* now resigns all claim upon her affection. He declines the honour of a duel offered him by the Austrian ambassador, and determines to start for America forthwith on board the packet *Washington*, accompanied by the enthusiastic *Miss Elton*, who has entered into a theatrical engagement with a New York manager. The curtain falls upon a scene of reconciliation between the actor and the *Prince of Wales*.

Absurd as the play is, and greatly inferior in all respects to other dramatic works by the same hand, it is yet not without a certain theatrical effectiveness, which indeed rarely failed Dumas. The story is intelligibly told, and many strong situations are contrived. The dialogue seems vapid, and the long speeches turgid and tawdry enough in the translation; but eloquently and pointedly delivered in the original, these must certainly have possessed considerable force. Illumined by the genius of Lemaître the representation could scarcely fail to impress. But the drama becomes only a thing to laugh at when poorly played and rendered in the baldest of English. "Edmund Kean" at the Holborn is but a tedious extravaganza in four long acts. Out of deference, probably, to the scruples of the licenser, some changes have been effected in the names of certain of the characters—the *Prince of Wales*, for instance, becomes in the English version the *Prince of Hesselstadt*—but otherwise no attempt has been made to reduce the marvels and eccentricities of the original. That the play is offensive to the memory of a great English actor is a matter of small concern to our modern audiences, who have shown themselves in the case of "David Garrick" very ignorant or apathetic respecting the facts of biography. Kean was faulty enough, and made shameful havoc of his supreme abilities, but he was not the ridiculous idiot that M. Dumas has portrayed. The play fails in English from the remote position it seems to occupy in regard to the sympathies and experiences of the audience. It deals with a home subject after so foreign and strange a fashion that recognition is out of the question. The interest of the story is lost in its incongruity, and as a consequence the spectators are

rather moved to mirth than to applause. The reception of "Edmund Kean" was far from enthusiastic.

Kean is played by Mr. Swinbourne, an experienced actor, who inclines to the pompous utterance, the bass tones and deliberate gestures of conventional tragedy. Mr. Swinbourne does not attempt any resemblance to Kean either of look or of bearing, but invests the part, if with undue weight, still with considerable force. He is without impulse and alertness, and his elocutionary method is of a laboured kind; still his denunciation of the *Prince* in the scene of "Romeo and Juliet" was delivered with much energy, and won for him the most genuine applause of the evening. Mr. Gaston Murray represents skilfully enough the *Prince of Wales*, and Mr. E. Shepherd appears as the Austrian Minister.

XXXVIII.

“THE WOMAN IN WHITE.”

[Olympic Theatre.—October 1871.]

MR. WILKIE COLLINS'S famous novel, "The Woman in White," appeared upon the stage of the Surrey Theatre some ten years ago, but the adaptation then presented had not the benefit of the author's supervision or even of his sanction. Mr. Collins has now prepared an elaborate dramatic version of his story. The work is in four acts, with a prologue or introductory scene, while a falling curtain subdivides the later portions of the play into tableaux after a fashion that has long prevailed on the Parisian stage.

Mr. Collins has on previous occasions manifested his dramatic skill, and done much to disprove an opinion too generally entertained, that a novelist is of necessity disqualified as a candidate for theatrical honours. No doubt certain fables are better suited for publication in a book than for representation on the stage; but the novelist and the dramatist both deal in fiction, and the main distinction between their occupations consists in regard for the require-

ments of the reader on the one hand, and of the spectator on the other. The story of a novel may be also told upon the stage, only it is indispensable that it should be told upon a different plan. It is allowable to perplex and mystify a reader to almost any extent; but it is found advisable to enlighten a spectator concerning the secrets of a plot at the earliest possible opportunity. A bewildered audience is apt to grow impatient, and to resent being treated with anything like want of confidence. Broadly stated, it may be said that while a novel depends for success upon its appeal to curiosity, a play wins applause in proportion to its power to move sympathy. The *dramatis personæ* may be exhibited in a state of great entanglement and confusion, but the audience in their position as "lookers-on" require to see not only more of the game but every move and turn in it. Mr. Collins has fully appreciated this view of the case, and has been heedful to present his story from first to last in an intelligible form. For the audience there is at no time any mystery; a series of complications is submitted to them, but a clue to the maze of incidents is always in their hands. Very free manipulation of the original work is thus involved, and indeed the drama of "The Woman in White" has claims to be regarded rather as an independent production than as an adaptation of an ordinary kind.

In bringing so intricate a story upon the stage, difficulty is inevitable in deciding how much to disclose by the conversation of the characters, and how much to represent palpably and in action before the audience. Mr. Collins has judged that the foundation-stone of his romance is the original tampering with the register of marriages in old Welmingham church by *Sir Percival Glyde*. This crime, detected or suspected by the half-witted *Anne Catherick*, leads to her confinement at his instance in a lunatic asylum, her escape, her meeting with *Walter Hartright*, and the subsequent events of the novel. Accordingly, the introductory act of the play is devoted to an exhibition of *Sir Percival's* furtive visit to the vestry, and his forging the entry of his parents' marriage with a view to proving his legal right to his baronetcy. This scene, admirably arranged and well acted, won great applause; but the

necessity for its representation may be open to question. Playgoers are never loth to credit the iniquitous antecedents of the villain of a drama, and are quite willing at any moment to join in convicting him of forgery committed behind the scenes. Moreover, the introduction of the vestry suggests that the events of the story are to be closely followed on the stage, and that *Sir Percival* is to meet his doom from his inability to unlock the door after he has accidentally set fire to the church. But the play provides a different fate for the wicked baronet. He suddenly disappears, and is supposed to be drowned at sea while endeavouring to escape in an open boat from the officers of justice. This prologue, however, has the advantage of bringing upon the stage *Walter Hartright*, the hero of the novel, and his friend *Pesca*, the Italian professor, whose connection with a political plot leads ultimately to the assassination of *Count Fosco* for treachery to the secret society of which both are members. The two following acts are good examples of the author's adroitness in connecting his incidents and condensing the interviews of his characters. *Hartright* departs disconsolate from Limmeridge Park; *Miss Fairlie* becomes the wife of *Sir Percival*; and *Anne Catherick*, escaping in a dying state from her asylum, is seen by *Count Fosco*, who at once conceives his plot for destroying the identity of *Lady Glyde* by compelling her to change places with her unfortunate half-sister. The second act is especially to be noted for the dramatic effect with which it is invested, for the marked interest it excites, and the artistic ingenuity of its scenic contrivances. It was received with tumultuous applause. In its closing acts the play languishes somewhat. The author had perhaps been better advised if he had contented himself with setting forth simply the rescue of *Lady Glyde* from the madhouse to which, in her character of *Anne Catherick*, she had been consigned, and the wresting from *Count Fosco* a confession of his share in the infamous conspiracy. Mr. Collins, however, has preferred to follow the details of his book, and to prove at undue length the discrepancy between the date of *Lady Glyde's* departure from her husband's house in Hampshire, and the date of *Anne Catherick's* death in St. John's Wood. This,

an important point in the book, becomes of small value in the drama. The play concludes tragically, after the exciting interview between *Hartright* and the *Count*, with the death of the latter at the hands of the secret society, the murder being effected out of the presence of the audience. The curtain descends upon a picture of the devoted *Countess Fosco* fainting as she contemplates the slain body of her husband.

This sombre catastrophe excited some disapprobation, but, upon the whole, the reception of the play was favourable enough. If somewhat repellent in character, the force and ingenuity of the work are not to be denied.

XXXIX.

"THE TEMPEST."

[Queen's Theatre.—November 1871.]

"THE TEMPEST" has been revived, with a liberal provision of the scenic and musical embellishments which have long been deemed essential to an efficient representation of the play. Since the Restoration, indeed, the "Tempest" has almost invariably been considered as a convenient vehicle for operatic and spectacular effects. Moreover, it has undergone severe torture owing to the perverse ingenuity of its adapters. To these for many years the works of Shakspeare were but rough-hewn material which it was necessary for them to shape and polish for the purposes of the stage. The alteration of the "Tempest" by Dryden and Davenant, which Mr. Pepys saw produced at the Lincoln's-inn-fields Theatre in 1667—when he pronounced it the "most innocent play" he had ever seen, "of no great wit, but yet good above ordinary plays"—made cruel havoc of the poet's intentions. *Prospero* was provided with a second daughter named *Dorinda*; *Sycorax*, the dam of *Caliban*, was introduced, and, as a counterpart to *Miranda*, *Hippolito*, "a man who had never seen a woman." *Trinculo* appears as the boatswain, and is intrusted with great

part of the speeches of *Stephano*. *Hippolito*, wounded by *Ferdinand*, is cured by the application of "weapon salve" to *Ferdinand's* sword. And the text is otherwise tampered with after a most wanton fashion. In 1673, much to the irritation of Dryden, who regarded further dealings with the subject as wholly needless, and a reflection upon his own workmanship, Shadwell's version of the play was presented at the Dorset Gardens Theatre, and owing to the novelty of its mechanical devices and decorations, obtained extraordinary success. In 1746, at Drury Lane, in the absence of Garrick, the original text was reverted to, but, strange to say, on his resumption of the management Dryden's adaptation was again produced. It was chiefly, however, upon Shakspeare's play that Garrick founded, in 1756, his opera of the "Tempest." In this barbarous production *Prospero* was converted into a part for Beard, the singer, and required to deliver various solos and recitatives. John Kemble, though he mended it somewhat, was content to appear in Dryden's edition. It was in 1806 that the curious discussion raged as to the actor's dissyllabic pronunciation of the word "aches," and proved a source of great profit to the theatre. A crowded audience attended Cooke's first performance of *Prospero*, merely to ascertain whether he would or not adopt his manager's orthoepy. Cooke discreetly avoided the difficulty by omitting altogether the line in which the disputed word occurs. Dryden's adaptation was perhaps last seen upon the stage when Mr. Bunn produced it at Drury Lane, by way of rivalling Mr. Macready's ornate revival of the original at Covent Garden in 1838. The later performances of the "Tempest" by Mr. Phelps at Sadler's Wells, and Mr. Charles Kean at the Princess's, were, of course, faithful to the poet's text.

The date when Purcell's music was first resorted to for the enrichment of the performance of the "Tempest" can now hardly be ascertained. The composer was born in 1658, and could not therefore have supplied musical illustrations to the versions of either Dryden or Shadwell. The echo song by *Ferdinand* and *Ariel* which Mr. Pepys found so "mighty pretty" was composed by Bannister. The music of Garrick's opera was the work apparently of

John Christopher Smith. The songs and choruses of Purcell and Arne have been in great part retained at the Queen's Theatre, and to these are now for the first time added the graceful interludes and orchestral accompaniments of Mr. Arthur Sullivan. Mr. Charles Kean's arrangement of the play is mainly followed, with the omission, however, of the opening scene, which should represent the deck of a ship. The speeches of *King Alonzo* and his companions are much condensed; the masque, with the descent of Juno in a car drawn by peacocks, is made the excuse for the display of quite pantomimic splendour; and a grand ballet terminates the third act. For this interpolation there is no warrant to be found in the play. It obtains great applause, however, owing to the skill of the dancers, the fancifulness of their costumes, and the vivacity of Mr. Sullivan's tunes. The play concludes with the departure of *Prospero* in his ship after his delivery of the original epilogue, the release of *Ariel*, who is seen suspended in the air over a glittering expanse of ocean, and the abandonment of the island to the sole charge of *Caliban*, who as the curtain descends lies stretched upon the shore basking in the rays of the setting sun.

The revival was received with a measure of favour which may probably content the manager, whose advertisements threaten the future expulsion of Shakspeare altogether from his stage should the present venture prove unremunerative. Commendation is due for the painstaking and liberality which distinguish the production; at the same time it must be said that it tests rather too severely the histrionic resources of the theatre. Mr. Ryder, who appeared as *Caliban* under Mr. Kean's management, now plays *Prospero*, but permits too many traces of his former occupation to disfigure his new portraiture. The actor lacks dignity and refinement of bearing, and enunciates his grand speeches too hurriedly and inharmoniously. Miss Rhodes is scarcely a competent *Miranda*; *Ferdinand* is represented by Mr. H. C. Sidney, a young actor who is new to London and apparently to the stage, and who, though he looks the part well enough and is not ungraceful in his movements, seems to have little appreciation of

poetic sentiment or skill in the delivery of blank verse; *Trinculo* in the hands of Mr. Crabb ceases to be comical. More praiseworthy impersonations were the *Stephano* of Mr. Vollaire, the *Ariel* of Miss Hodson, and the *Caliban* of Mr. George Rignold. Upon the stage Ariel of necessity becomes sadly materialised: afflicted with certain attributes of the ordinary ballet girl which clash gravely with poetic prepossessions and imaginings. Still, disenchantment of this kind must always have attended the representation of the part, whether by the boy of Shakspeare's time or "the singing lady" of later years; and these unavoidable conditions conceded, Miss Hodson is to be complimented on the grace, animation, and vocal skill which distinguish her impersonations. Exception may be permitted, however, to the swinging bat of very substantial contour from the back of which she chants her most popular air. The feat is too trying both to the singer and her audience. Mr. Rignold's *Caliban* is perhaps needlessly repulsive of aspect, and the tusks and pasteboard jaws worn by the actor have the disadvantage of hindering his articulation. But the interpretation is conceived in a right spirit, is sustained with genuine art and untiring vigour, and should greatly fortify Mr. Rignold's reputation. The costumes are appropriate and tasteful, and the scenery is thoroughly adequate. The orchestra, although enlarged for the occasion, is scarcely strong enough in stringed instruments to do full justice to Mr. Sullivan's music.

XL.

"LOVE FOR LOVE."

[Gaiety Theatre.—November 1871.]

It is now fifty years since "Elia" expressed his regret that "the artificial comedy, or comedy of manners," had become extinct on our stage. "Congreve and Farquhar," he wrote, "show their heads once in seven years only, to be exploded and put down instantly. The times cannot bear them. Is it for a few wild speeches or occasional licence

of dialogue? I think not altogether. The business of their dramatic characters will not stand the moral test. We screw everything up to that." His ingenious argument, that the dramatists of the latter part of the seventeenth century should not be tried by the ordinary standard of morality, but considered apart as dealing with "a chaotic people"—a "Utopia of gallantry where pleasure is duty and the manners perfect freedom"—was refuted and rebuked by Macaulay with perhaps needless solemnity. Lamb could hardly have designed that his fanciful pleading should be considered after a fashion so matter-of-fact. He was but urging excuses, sufficient unto himself, for his own inclinings as a student of past literature. To him the coarseness of Congreve and his compeers was compensated by their wealth of wit and humour. He found himself "the better," as he writes, "for the perusal of one of Congreve's—nay, why should I not add even of Wycherley's comedies?" He was content to forget that these dramatists were really painting, with some indispensable heightening of colour for theatrical effect, the society of their times. So far from treating of an imaginary or artificial world, they were the creatures of their age, and, as Macaulay says, "the garb, the manners, the topics of conversation" they presented on the stage were "those of the real town and of the passing day." Profligacy was the vogue of the period. The "fine gentleman" was little better than a superbly dressed scoundrel; the "fine lady" was a woman without virtue, almost without decency. Even the wit of the dialogue reflected a foible of the time. Everybody was then constrained to be witty and to "banter." Society was rife with lampoons and satires; no letter was complete that did not contain some "strokes of wit." Repartee was cultivated as an art. This "cant of wit," as Leigh Hunt points out, greatly affected Wycherley, but came to its head in Congreve, and subsequently declined.

Since Lamb wrote his essay on the artificial comedy of the last century, "Love for Love" has rarely been represented. A modified version of the comedy was played for a few nights, however, some five-and-twenty years ago, during Mr. Webster's tenancy of the Haymarket Theatre; and Mr. Macready produced the work with much painstaking.

ing care at Drury Lane in 1842. On this occasion the cast was remarkably strong. Miss Faucit appeared as *Angelica*, Mrs. Nisbett and Mrs. Stirling as the sisters *Frail* and *Foresight*, and Mrs. Keeley as the hoyden *Miss Prue*; Mr. Keeley played *Ben*; Mr. Compton, *Foresight*; Mr. Anderson, *Valentine*; and Mr. Phelps, *Scandal*. Still the comedy was repeated some half-a-dozen times only. Originally presented at the Lincoln's-inn-fields Theatre in 1695, when the leading characters were sustained by Betterton, Dogget, Underhill, Sandford, Mrs. Bracegirdle, and Mrs. Barry, the marvel is perhaps that "Love for Love" should have so long retained possession of the stage. But the most generally popular of Congreve's works, it has been peculiarly a favourite with the actors. John Kemble and Elliston were both admired representatives of *Valentine*; Foote, Shuter, and Bannister found congenial occupation in the part of *Ben*; Dowton was a famous *Sir Sampson*, and the *Miss Prue* of Mrs. Jordan won extraordinary favour. Probably the work derived its vitality on the stage less from its own merits than from the histrionic traditions of which it had become the treasury. At the present time "Love for Love" has a curiously obsolete air.

Mr. Hollingshead has compressed the comedy into three acts, and subjected it to a severe process of expurgation. He would even appear to have studied Jeremy Collier's famous "Short View" as a preliminary to his task. Certainly some of the changes introduced manifest exaggerated regard for the interests of conventionality. *Valentine*, simulating lunacy, is now made to cry "I am Honesty" instead of "I am Truth;" and reckless of the memory of the lady afterwards known as Mrs. Piozzi, *Mrs. Frail* is called *Mrs. Thrale* at the Gaiety. Many of the characters are reduced almost to skeletons, and *Prue's* nurse and *Trapland* the usurer are suppressed altogether. Much of Congreve's dialogue is necessarily cut out. The wit and impropriety of the dramatist are intertwined so closely that little can be done in the way of sparing the flowers and destroying the weeds. However, there is little left to shock the ear in this new version of "Love for Love." Of the representation generally it must be said that it was inadequate. The actors are without practice in performing works

of the class; they have no acquaintance or sympathy with the characters they are called on to sustain, and often, it would seem, they fail to comprehend the meaning of the speeches they deliver. The art of portraying the stately mien and manners of the past, of speaking Congreve's carefully balanced lines and studied turns of wit and conceit, is not to be mastered in a month. The scenes of *Prue*, the hoyden—played with redundant vivacity by Miss Farren—and of *Ben*, the sailor—forcibly represented by Mr. Stoye—however, afforded the house genuine amusement. The characters of *Valentine* and *Angelica* are sustained by Mr. W. Rignold and Miss Cavendish. The sisters *Frail* and *Foresight*—deprived of their quarrel scene, probably out of respect for propriety—are but indifferently played by Miss Berend and Mrs. Leigh. The costumes are sufficiently handsome, but are anachronistic, pertaining rather to the age of Garrick than of Betterton. But full-bottomed wigs have probably long vanished from the tiring-room. Mr. Stoye's attire as *Ben* is inexcusably grotesque, however, and seems borrowed from the extravaganza of "Black-Eyed Susan."

XLI.

"THE BUSY BODY."

[Haymarket Theatre.—November 1871.]

MRS. CENTLIVRE produced altogether about a score of plays, but of these three only—"The Wonder," "A Bold Stroke for a Wife," and "The Busy Body"—have retained a position in the repertory of the modern stage. It is less surprising, however, that so many of the lady's works have departed than that any of them should be found still surviving. For Mrs. Centlivre's comedies are, for the most part, feebly written, loosely constructed, and replete with improbable situations and unnatural characters. To read "The Busy Body," for instance, is to engage in a very ungrateful employment. There is not a witty line in it from beginning to end, the fable is wholly without interest,

and the glimpses afforded of the life and manners of a past age are few and imperfect. But the dramatist had been herself an actress, and possessed an acute perception of the means whereby to attain theatrical success. She thoroughly appreciated the fact that an audience can be sufficiently diverted by a quick march of incidents, by the constant movement of the *dramatis personæ*, by characters clearly defined, though of conventional type, and by the general vivacity of the representation. She did not write to display her own wit, to satirise her times, to teach or to preach in any respect. She was content if she could but make the spectators laugh. Certain of the scenes of "The Busy Body" she borrowed from "The Devil is an Ass" of Ben Jonson. The comedy was first performed at Drury Lane in 1709. Even the actors engaged in the representation are reputed to have viewed the play with contempt. Wilks is said to have abandoned the part of *Sir George Airy* at rehearsal, and to have resumed it only upon the tearful entreaty of the dramatist. But "The Busy Body" was played on thirteen nights during its first season. The next year it was performed at both Drury Lane and the Haymarket theatres with marked success. A comedian named Pack, famous in his time, was the original *Marplot*. At the Haymarket Dogget represented the character. Dick Estcourt, the friend of Addison and Steele, was the first impersonator of *Sir Francis Gripe*. In later times Woodward acquired great popularity as *Marplot*, and on his secession from Garrick's company, the part was undertaken by Garrick himself. The result, however, seems to have disappointed expectation. Murphy states that Woodward "could put on such a vacant innocent countenance, that all the mischief he did by being busy in other people's affairs appeared to be the effect of accident; whereas Garrick had so much meaning, such strong intelligence in his countenance, that he seemed to do everything by design. It may therefore be fairly said that in this attempt he failed for the first time." Murphy's testimony is not now to be impeached; but it has to be borne in mind that Garrick's *Abel Drugger* was famous for that very assumption of vacuity of expression which is said to have been absent from his portrayal of *Marplot*.

At the Haymarket "The Busy Body" is played in three acts, the scenes devoted to the interviews of *Sir Jealous Traffic's* daughter *Isabinda* and her lover *Charles* being omitted. The intelligibility of the story is fairly preserved, however, and the representation appeared to give great satisfaction to the audience. The management is carefully conservative of histrionic traditions, and possesses the only company in London competent to give effect to comedies of old standing. Probably the "stage business" of "The Busy Body" at the Haymarket reproduces, with tolerable fidelity, the method of representation adopted at Drury Lane a century and a half ago. The concealment of a lover behind a chimney-board, and the smashing of china vases to mask the noise of his escaping, are not now very fresh expedients for exciting mirth; yet *Sir George Airy's* adventure of this kind, thanks to the cleverness of its conduct, told upon the audience as though it were quite a novelty to them, and roused unusual enthusiasm. Mr. Buckstone plays *Marplot* in his most genial manner. With the exception of Mr. Charles Mathews, he is now perhaps the only living actor who has ever sustained the part. The unceasing curiosity which possesses him, and betrays itself in his perpetual restlessness of glance and gesture, in his fidgeting hither and thither, and persistent air of anxious inquiry, is irresistibly humorous in effect. Mr. Chippendale is well versed in the prescriptions of the part of *Sir Francis Gripe*, and his "make-up" is a close following of the well-known portrait of Munden in the character. Mr. Howe invests *Sir George Airy* with the robust animation essential to the impersonation of the rakes of quality of the last century. *Miranda*, though incorrectly costumed, is played with much graceful coquetry by Miss Robertson.

XLII.

"THE BELLS."

[Lyceum Theatre.—November 1871.]

MM. ERCKMANN-CHATRIAN'S *étude dramatique*, "Le Juif Polonais," was not originally designed for representation; it purported to be simply a story cast in a dramatic mould. But it has often been the fate of works thus constituted to enter the theatre somewhat in despite of their authors' professions. In this way Lord Byron's tragedies became acting plays, notwithstanding his invariable protest that "they were not composed with the most remote view to the stage." And we may perhaps suspect with Lord Jeffrey that few dramas are written without some thought of the effect they would create in performance crossing the minds of the dramatists. "We should as soon," he writes, "expect an orator to compose a speech altogether unfit to be spoken." And he argues that a drama can scarcely be written at all if its author "has no hankering after stage effect—if he is not haunted with the visible presentiment of the persons he has created—if in setting down a vehement invective he does not fancy the tone in which Mr. Kean would deliver it, and anticipate the long applauses of the pit." "Le Juif Polonais," however, is hardly to be judged in this wise. It is a production of an exceptional kind, which sets at defiance the ordinary prescriptions of the theatre, and is in many essential respects unfitted for representation. Not only is the plot of a more painful nature than is usually tolerated by modern audiences, but the play is devoted to the elaboration of one idea only—to the development, under peculiar conditions, of one particular character. Still, the inherent dramatic force of the work has enabled it to break through conventional trammels and to achieve extraordinary success in performance. It bears upon it, indeed, the impress of genius, and is perhaps something of the kind of play—fantastic, weird, and intense—that Hawthorne might have written. The favour with which it has

been received in the theatre is only to be accounted for by the fact that playgoers, upon the score of its especial merits, have consented to waive their customary prepossessions in regard to dramatic entertainments.

The fable is sufficiently simple. Fifteen years before the rising of the curtain, *Mathias*, the host of an auberge in Alsace, during the depth of winter, for the sake of the gold he carried in his girdle, has cruelly murdered a Polish Jew who had been for one night his guest. The assassin has remained unsuspected. The stolen money has been to him the foundation of good fortune. He has prospered, enjoys the esteem of his fellow-citizens, and occupies among them the position of burgomaster. Still the sense of his guilt oppresses him. He is continually haunted by the sound of the bells of the sledge in which the Jew had driven from the door of the auberge. (For the fact that these sounds are audible to *Mathias* and the audience, but are not supposed to be heard by the *dramatis personæ* generally, the authors may plead the precedent of the introduction of the ghost in the closet scene of *Hamlet*.) *Mathias's* mental and bodily strength is being gradually undermined, less by the torture of remorse than by the ceaseless dread of discovery. He sleeps alone in a locked chamber lest he should betray himself by talking in his sleep. He keeps constant watch over his every word and action. He has resolved for his greater security to bestow the hand of his daughter *Annette* and her large fortune upon one *Christian*, a young sergeant of gendarmes, who has displayed some anxiety to pierce the mystery of the murder. As the husband of *Annette*, *Christian* will be silenced and disarmed should he learn anything to the prejudice of *Mathias*. But there is much to keep awake the memory of the murderer. He is required to reckon his daughter's dowry, which includes certain gold pieces stolen from the Jew. It is again winter, and his friends and gossips are reminded by its severity of the date of the murder of the Polonais. Further, *Mathias* has seen at the fair of Ribeauville the performances of a mesmerist able to wrest from his patients, in a clairvoyant state, confession of the most cherished secrets of their lives. *Mathias* hastens the union of *Christian* and *Annette*, and the wedding feast is

celebrated. At night the burgomaster is visited by a fearful dream, which is in itself a curious psychological study. The preceding incidents and suggestions of the story are reproduced in the vision with enhanced and yet distorted effect. *Mathias* is half conscious that he is dreaming, but is constrained to yield to the terrors of his position. He believes himself on trial before a court of justice for the murder of the Jew, and in spite of his protestations of innocence, is induced by the power of the mesmerist to divulge every particular of his guilt. He calls upon *Christian* to aid him, but is informed that, convinced of his criminality, *Christian* has perished by his own hand. Sentence of death is passed upon the prisoner. With morning come the burgomaster's family to his chamber. He staggers from his couch a wan ghost of his former self, and falls dead in the arms of his wife and child. His crime remains undiscovered; but it has been punished.

"The Bells" is an English version, by Mr. Leopold Lewis, of MM. Erckmann-Chatrian's play. The great merit of the adaptation consists in its fidelity to the original. Certain of the dialogues have been abridged, and in the first act the entry of a second Jew, merely to remind *Mathias* of his victim, is dispensed with. In lieu a vision is shown of the murdered man sitting in his sledge and awaiting the attack of *Mathias*. This may be counted an improvement, for the second Jew is rather a disturbing figure in the composition. In other respects the intentions of MM. Erckmann-Chatrian have been fairly carried out in this English version, the costumes, stage-fittings, and scenery, moreover, being of a most liberal and costly nature. The mechanical contrivances are perfect, and the performance is much assisted by the musical accompaniments of M. Singla, who comes in person from the Théâtre Cluny to conduct the orchestra. "The Bells" was listened to with the most breathless attention, and extraordinary applause followed the fall of the curtain. How far the play may secure enduring success remains of course to be seen. Our audiences have been so long accustomed to flimsy exhibitions upon the stage, that they have perhaps forgotten that the British drama once possessed a robust constitution that did not shrink upon occasion from the distressing or even the appalling. In

any case, this tragic story of Alsace is well worth seeing, not merely for itself, but for the remarkable power displayed by Mr. Irving in the part of the burgomaster, *Mathias*. Acting at once so intelligent and so intense has not been seen on the London stage for many years. The earlier scenes may lack repose somewhat, and the vision of the trial is certainly protracted unduly; but the actor is thoroughly possessed by his part, and depicts its agonising fear and passionate despair with real artistic force. On the close of the representation, Mr. Irving's exertions were rewarded, as they deserved to be, by the most hearty applause of the audience. The other characters are of small significance, but they are efficiently sustained by the members of the Lyceum company.

XLIII.

"NIGHT AND MORNING," AND "ELFIE."

[Gaiety Theatre.—December 1871.]

THESE works both proceed from the pen of Mr. Boucicault. "Night and Morning" proves to be yet another version of Mdme. de Girardin's "*La Joie fait Peur*." Under such names as "Sunshine through the Clouds," "Hopes and Fears," "Not in Vain," and "Joy is Dangerous," this admired comedy has been long known to English audiences. Of these adaptations Mr. Boucicault's is by no means the worst, yet it cannot be said that it reflects very faithfully the merits of the original. The pathos of the fable could hardly be destroyed altogether even by the most bungling of British manipulators, but its harmony and grace are easily injured by ungentle handling. In lieu of a mother mourning her sailor son, whom she believes to be lost at sea, Mr. Boucicault presents a young widow deeply grieving for her departed husband, and yet prepared to conceive herself an object of affection in the eyes of a youthful officer, who is in truth the lover of her sister-in-law. This change, in itself injudicious, affects disadvantageously the position of the chief character, the old

servant, originally played by M. Regnier, and now, converted into an Irishman and called *Kerry*, sustained by Mr. Boucicault himself. The venerable butler, whose long years of fidelity have entitled him to be eccentric and despotic, is hardly a credible figure in the household of a newly married couple. Moreover, he is now charged with the broad brogue and the comic speeches of the traditional Irish peasant of the stage. Accepting, however, the conditions thus imposed upon the representation, it must be admitted that Mr. Boucicault plays the part of *Kerry* with marked ability, and with a force of pathetic expression that is rare upon the modern stage. It is obvious that he has carefully studied M. Regnier's method of portraying the character; still his performance is not merely imitative but discloses original qualities worthy of high commendation. The actor's success was complete.

"*Elfie*" is a melodrama in three acts of so old-established a pattern that it suggests reference to Mr. Fitzball's famous play of "*Jonathan Bradford*." Although it has not hitherto been performed in London, "*Elfie*," it seems, has enjoyed much favour in the provinces, and has been successfully produced in America. The heroine is the barmaid of the Cherry Tree Inn, the landlord of which establishment, who is also an itinerant jeweller and a rich usurer, is accustomed to conceal a store of gold and bank-notes beneath the hearthstone of his bar-parlour. *Elfie* is in love with *Bob*, a mate in the merchant service, who has bestowed his affections, however, upon *Rose*, the daughter of *Dr. Air-castle*, a village chemist in a ruined condition, attributable to his foolish fondness for alchemical pursuits. *Rose* has a second admirer in one *Deepcar*, an adventurer who, having been a journalist, an actor, and a photographer, is now connected with a wax-work exhibition, of which a ruffian named *Sadlove* is the chief proprietor. In order that lack of money may not hinder his winning the hand of *Rose*, *Deepcar*, at the instigation of *Sadlove*, determines to plunder the Cherry Tree Inn, and so to conduct his design that his rival *Bob* shall be suspected of the offence. Attired in a sailor's suit, and hiding his face behind a waxen mask which the spectators are required to regard as an accurate reproduction of the features of *Bob*, *Deepcar* robs the host of

the Cherry Tree of his gold and very nearly deprives him also of his life. The commission of this crime is exhibited in one of those partitioned, double-floored scenes which were once deemed to be great marvels of theatrical contrivance. *Deepcar's* theft and murderous assault have been witnessed by *Elfie*, the barmaid, who, deceived by the criminal's disguise, believes for some time that *Bob* the sailor is the guilty one. Indeed, the evidence against *Bob* is of a sufficiently convincing kind, for the landlord is also prepared to denounce him as a felon. But persisting in his innocence, *Bob* at length brings his friends over to his own way of thinking. Aided by *Joe*, a blind sailor, who is much in love with her, *Elfie* resolves upon hunting down and delivering to justice the real offender. This she is enabled to do rather by a chain of happy accidents than owing to any great exercise of ingenuity on her own part. The play concludes in the customary way with retribution in the form of police constables arresting the guilty, and forming an imposing picture for the curtain to descend upon. *Bob* is, of course, united to *Rose Aircastle*, and *Elfie* consents to accept the blind man *Joe* as her husband. For some strange reason the surnames of *Bob*, *Joe*, and *Elfie* are not revealed to the audience.

"*Elfie*" is not described as original, and has the air of being a sort of cento of bygone melodramas. The majority of its situations have frequently seen service on the boards of the minor theatres, and the materials of the play generally are of little worth. Apparently the dramatist is so afraid of soaring over the heads of his audience that he stoops unduly. His fable is of a coarse and commonplace kind, and is not to be commended to the favour of spectators of any refinement or cultivation. At the same time the skill which comes of practice and experience is manifest throughout the work. Obscurity is avoided, the incidents follow each other rapidly, animation always possesses the scene, and theatrical effect is heedfully studied. The dialogue, too, is almost invariably vivacious. The representation was thoroughly efficient, it being understood that no demand is made upon the players for any exercise of the subtleties of their art. Considerable praise, however, is due to Mr. Rignold, who contrives to invest with marked

individuality the rather unattractive part of the blind sailor *Joe*. Mr. H. Neville is exuberantly genial as *Bob*, and certainly spares no exertion to give effect to the character. The criminal couple, *Deepcar* and *Sadlove*, are respectably sustained by Mr. G. F. Neville and Mr. Atkins. *Elfie* is played in the most pleasant and lively manner by Mrs. Boucicault. The scenes of the Cherry Tree Inn—seen from within and without—are quite irreproachable.

XLIV.

“PYGMALION AND GALATEA.”

[Haymarket Theatre.—December 1871.]

FROM some deficiency of observation or of sympathy Mr. Gilbert has not hitherto succeeded greatly as a writer of comedies dealing with modern life and manners; his plots have been found void of interest, his characters have lacked vitality, and his claims to applause have rested mainly on his copious provision of dialogues flavoured with wit of rather an acidulated sort. But he has evinced peculiar aptitude in handling after a novel and fanciful manner themes and suggestions not of his own devising, and by their special nature exempt from the conditions governing the real and the credible. Thus from *Mdme. de Genlis's* fairy story he was enabled to frame the attractive comedy of “*The Palace of Truth* ;” and now manipulating the old classical fable of *Pygmalion*, he has contrived a play which can afford comparison with his former achievement. The inventiveness displayed in these works may not be of a high order, may occasionally be somewhat perversely exercised, and may wear rather an air of mannered artifice; but still it has unquestionably its meritorious side. Public entertainment is provided of no unworthy kind, and a measure of literary skill is fairly demonstrated. That the story of *Pygmalion* gains much from the dramatist's treatment of it can hardly be said; but a pleasant and acceptable work has nevertheless resulted from his labours.

According to Mr. Gilbert, Pygmalion was a sculptor, not of Cyprus, as many have supposed, but of Athens, who had married *Cynisca*, one of the nymphs of Diana. At the time of their union, it had been provided by the gods that it should be in the power of either to inflict the penalty of blindness upon whichever first proved unfaithful to his or her marriage vows. *Pygmalion* and *Cynisca*, upon the rising of the curtain, are discovered to be a most contented couple, the sculptor invariably fashioning his statues from the form and features of his wife. In this way he has carved a life-sized, draped effigy of the sea-nymph *Galatea*, a work of extreme beauty. The sculptor repines, however, that with all his art the productions of his chisel, animated as they may seem, are but marble and motionless after all. The gods punish his presumptuous regrets by endowing his *Galatea* with life. Presently she breathes, moves, and speaks, confessing her love for *Pygmalion*, and winning his in return. The vivified statue is a creature of perfectly innocent and joyous humanity, and unavoidably suggests reference to Hawthorne's *Donatello*, the animated Faun of Praxiteles. The presence of the loving and living *Galatea* in the house of the married sculptor is of course inconvenient enough. *Cynisca* becomes furiously jealous, and at last, availing herself of the power vested in her upon her marriage, invokes the wrath of the gods and condemns *Pygmalion* to blindness. Too late *Cynisca* learns that the sculptor only loves in his statue her own idealised self. Rather heartlessly, he even anathematises *Galatea* for the afflictions she has brought upon himself and his home. *Galatea*, heartbroken and overcome with the bitterness of life, resolves to resume her former state. As she becomes marble again, *Pygmalion* suddenly recovers his sight, and the curtain falls upon the reunion of husband and wife.

This slight theme in the hands of a French dramatist would probably have occupied one act only. Subjecting it to extreme tension, however, Mr. Gilbert has given it the form of a three-act play. He has endeavoured to cloak the tenuity of his subject by wrapping round it, so to speak, many episodical scenes. These are so far connected with the main fable that they assist in a measure the exhibition of the nature and character of the living statue. To *Pygma-*

lion a sister is given, *Myrene*, who has for lover one *Leucippe*, a soldier. *Galatea*, prizing greatly her newly-found gift of life, is horrified at the profession of *Leucippe*, and when with his bow and arrow he kills a harmless falcon accuses him of murder. This tenderness of sympathy with vitality even in its lowlier forms is notably one of *Donatello's* traits. Further *Pygmalion* is furnished with a rich patron in *Chrysos*, who, although profoundly ignorant of art and a boor in thought and bearing, desires to purchase the marble *Galatea*. Encountering, however, the living nymph, he conceives her to be merely the model who had posed for the statue, and permits himself considerable licence in addressing her. She sees no evil in his rudeness, but believing all mankind like herself to proceed from the statuary's skill, simply concludes that he has been carved by "a novice in the art," an adaptation of *Hamlet's* suggestion as to the men made by Nature's journeymen. The gallantries of *Chrysos*, however, provoke the anger of his shrewish wife *Daphene*, who upbraids him vehemently for his misconduct. These incidents, although in themselves sufficiently amusing, are set forth so lengthily as to interfere seriously with the leading subject of the work. Indeed, when once the audience has become familiarised with the attributes of the living statue, the interest of the play steadily declines. *Pygmalion's* loss of sight is awkwardly introduced, and has little real influence upon the story, while a certain obscurity as to the motives of the characters renders the closing scenes comparatively ineffective. The comedy is written in blank verse, which, if rarely melodious or very choice in diction, is often terse and bright enough. Some of the dialogues are especially to be commended for their quaint humour and vivacity. Altogether, indeed, the production merits high praise for its fantastic cleverness and genuine freshness of treatment.

The representation owed much to the skill and charm of Miss Robertson's *Galatea*. The lady wears her classical drapery most gracefully, and enunciates her speeches with admirable art. In the last act she displayed a command of pathetic expression with which she has not hitherto been credited. *Cynisca* is played by Miss Caroline Hill, who delivers her outburst of jealousy on discovering the loves of *Pygmalion* and his statue with a passionate abandonment

that well deserved the great applause it evoked. *Pygmalion*, who is little more than a walking gentleman in antique attire, is creditably sustained by Mr. Kendal. Mr. Buckstone performs the little part of *Chrysos* in his most amusing way, and is ably seconded by the exertions of Mrs. Chippendale in the part of *Daphene*.

XLV.

"BROKEN SPELLS."

[Court Theatre.—April 1872.]

THE events of the story of "Broken Spells," a new romantic drama in three acts, written by Dr. Westland Marston and Mr. W. G. Wills, are supposed to take place in Paris during the reign of the first Napoleon, but the authors have not aimed at investing their work with any marked historical import. The opening scene explains that a protracted lawsuit has terminated most disastrously for a certain *Bertrand D'Etanges*. He has failed to prove the marriage of his parents, and has therefore been adjudged by the Supreme Court to be of illegitimate origin. He is reduced to absolute poverty, the estates he had believed himself securely possessed of passing to his cousin, *Cyprien d'Evreux*. Nor is this the sum of *Bertrand's* misfortunes. His fallen condition parts him from his affianced bride, *Estelle Valamour*. The young lady's father forbids her marriage with her ruined lover, and destines her to be the wife of the prosperous *Cyprien*. Moved, however, by the passionate entreaty of *Bertrand*, *Estelle* consents to abandon her home and to fly with him. He leads her to a grand saloon in the *Café Garbois*, and there in strange terms discloses to her that he designs not marriage but death to be the goal of their elopement. Maddened apparently by his sorrows and despairing of the future, he pours poison into two cups of wine, and deliberately proposes that suicide shall crown the sufferings of *Estelle* and himself. The lady shrinks with horror from this frantic project, but *Bertrand's* persuasions assume

the tone of commands. With her rescue from this extraordinary position by the opportune arrival of *Cyprien* and *M. Valamond*, the first act of the drama concludes. When the story is resumed *Estelle* is found to be the happy wife of *Cyprien* and the mother of a child. *Bertrand* is rumoured to be dead. But at a grand entertainment given by *Cyprien*, an itinerant conjuror, whose services have been secured with a view to the amusement of the guests, is soon perceived to be *Bertrand* in disguise. He is still inflamed by his old passion for *Estelle*, and with this is now combined an insatiable thirst for vengeance. He is bent upon the destruction of his successful rival *Cyprien*. He discovers that *Amboise*, the brother of *Estelle*, a young gentleman who had been formerly concerned in some Bourbonist conspiracy against the Empire, has been harboured by the *D'Evreux*, who have thus become accomplices in his treason. In the course of his performances as a conjuror *Bertrand* reveals himself to *Estelle*, and by threatening to betray her husband and brother to the police, compels her to meet him by night, alone, and at some distance from her home. *Bertrand* it then appears is not only a prestidigitator; he is also a mesmerist. He subjects *Estelle* to his magnetic influence, and reconducts her in a comatose condition to the saloon of the Café Garbois. He then repeats his frenzied conduct of the first act, again drugs the wine, and iterates his wild invitation to suicide. *Estelle*, in a mesmeric trance, prepares to obey his bidding and to swallow poison. She is spared death by the timely advent of *Amboise* and *Cyprien*. The baffled *Bertrand* denounces these gentlemen to the police. But it is shown that *Amboise* is not a conspirator; he is rather a spy in the service of the Emperor. The *D'Evreux* are in no way chargeable with treason. *Bertrand* then dies by his own hand, and upon this catastrophe the curtain falls.

This grim story has claims to be valued on the score of its novelty and originality, but it must be confessed that the authors have succeeded in being strange and startling rather than interesting or agreeable. "Broken Spells" has been devised apparently in emulation of the murky melodramas dealing largely in poisoned cups, morbid passions, and animal magnetism, which have so long been popular upon

the Boulevards, and probably from a Parisian audience the play would win cordial approval. But the subject lies somewhat beyond the range of English sympathy, and has not been treated with the constructive skill and the keen sense of dramatic effectiveness which mark the manipulation of a French playwright. The conduct of the fable lacks symmetry and coherence; the incidents of the earlier scenes are overcrowded, while midway the action halts unduly, and interest is allowed to languish to a perilous degree. *Bertrand's* conjuring tricks have a comical air rather fatal to the situation in which they figure. Throughout the play, indeed, *Bertrand* and his proceedings are so mysterious and enigmatical as to defy general comprehension; the audience are assured that he is detestable, but they are less certain as to how far he is to be viewed as demented. And the heroine incurs loss of commiseration from the facility with which she transfers her affections from her lover to her husband. The writing of the drama is of unequal merit; the lighter scenes in which *Amboise* and his cousin *Lisette* appear, and which are introduced probably by way of relief, are weak to insipidity, but the declamatory speeches of *Bertrand* are greatly to be commended for their cultivated force and poetic fervour. The interview of the lovers in the first act, and its mesmeric reflex towards the close of the story, although of terribly sombre purport, are yet highly dramatic, and impart considerable literary merit to the work. "Broken Spells" was received with a fair amount of favour, and may possibly, its lurid and repellant plot notwithstanding, thrive as an entertainment by reason of its exceptional nature and its defiance of conventionality. Moreover, the dramatists deserve encouragement in that they have attempted to provide a play of more robust constitution and exciting quality than has for some time been given to our stage. Whatever may be its failings, "Broken Spells" is certainly not deficient in substance or in passion.

In the arduous part of *Bertrand* Mr. Hermann Vezin is seen to unusual advantage. Although too much inclined to hurry the delivery of his speeches, his acting displayed remarkable intensity of feeling, and was throughout of a genuinely artistic kind. *Estelle* is played by Miss Cavenish, whose histrionic method is rather mannered and

artificial, and who is unable to surrender herself sufficiently to the vehemently emotional situations in which she is required to appear. The lady, however, is animated and intelligent, and wears the quaint but picturesque costume of the First Empire gracefully enough. *Amboise* is represented by Mr. W. H. Fisher, an actor new to London, who has his art yet to acquire, and whose shortcomings endangered many passages of the play. The stage appointments are liberal and tasteful, the view of the saloon in the *Café Garbois* being a very admirable example of scenic arrangement.

XLVI.

"CYMBELINE."

[Queen's Theatre.—April 1872.]

THE tragedy of "Cymbeline"—for so, its happy conclusion, notwithstanding, it is entitled in the folio edition of 1623—has always been popular as an acting play. It duly underwent the process of mangling to which after the Restoration it was the fashion to subject all the writings of Shakspeare, and, adapted by Tom D'Urfey, appeared as "The Injured Princess; or, The Fatal Wager," at the Theatre Royal in 1682. D'Urfey tampered with the story and the language, changed the names of the characters, and indeed used the play vilely in every way. "The Injured Princess," however, was retained upon the stage, and was even played at Covent Garden so late as 1738. Theophilus Cibber first reverted to the original text during his management of the Haymarket in 1744, and Garrick two seasons later followed this good example and obtained great favour for the play by his assumption of the character of Posthumus. Under the rule of the Kembles "Cymbeline" prospered exceedingly. In 1787 Mrs. Siddons won signal applause as *Imogen*, undertaking the part, it was said, by way of cautioning Mrs. Jordan, whose admirers were urging her to very ambitious flights, not to venture upon tragic impersonations. Mrs. Siddons had previously requested

her friend Hamilton, the painter, to furnish her with "a slight sketch of a boy's dress to conceal the person as much as possible," for in that respect the great actress was always scrupulous. "Cymbeline" has been a play of strong casts. Kemble appeared as *Posthumus* to the *Iachimo* of Cooke; and in these parts Kean and Young encountered each other upon the stage. Charles Kemble endowed the minor character of *Arviragus* with peculiar grace. "Cymbeline" was one of the notable revivals which distinguished Mr. Macready's career as a manager, and though the work escaped the embellishing hands of Mr. Charles Kean at the Princess's, it occupied during several seasons a prominent position in Mr. Phelps's repertory at Sadler's Wells. The play was last represented in 1866 during Miss Helen Faucit's engagement at Drury Lane Theatre.

"Cymbeline" has been produced at the Queen's Theatre with considerable painstaking and liberality. The anachronistic nature of the story is, no doubt, a source of much bewilderment to the stage decorator who sets value upon archaic accuracy. Shakspeare did not concern himself on this head, took a fabulist's licence, and was content to send historic truth adrift upon a glorious sea of poetry. Nor does the question of correct appointments much move a general audience. As Hazlitt observed, "managers are not the Society of Antiquaries;" and the same may be said of ordinary playgoers. Some attempt has been made at the Queen's to invest *Cymbeline's* palace with the characteristics of Anglo-Saxon architecture; *Posthumus* assumes a kind of viking guise, and *Iachimo* and the *French Gentleman* wear the dress of Imperial Rome. The play has been greatly condensed, certain of the scenes have been transposed, and the acts have been divided anew. Curtailment was unavoidable, but the omissions are not always judicious, although it may be said that the intelligibility of the story is, on the whole, fairly preserved. The conflict between the Roman and British forces in the last act is not very impressively conducted; but the battles of the stage have long been clothed rather with comical than with awful attributes. The representation was sufficiently spirited, though lacking in

refinement and intellectuality. It is not easy, however, in these times to assemble a company qualified to sustain a Shakspearian play. Mr. Ryder is but a rough kind of *Iachimo*, but he possesses elocutionary skill, and plays with a vigour which always commends him to the approval of his audience. Mr. Marston and Mr. Lewis Ball both served under Mr. Phelps's standard at Sadler's Wells, and are enabled to supply fairly efficient representations of the parts of *Belarius* and *Cloten*. Mr. Rignold is a zealous and energetic *Posthumus*, but he rates the character as somewhat low in the scale of civilisation—as a very ancient Briton indeed, who has but for the occasion abandoned the use of woad as a means of complexional decoration. *Pisanio* was rather weakly supported, and there is little to be said in favour of the performers of the brothers *Guiderius* and *Arviragus*. Considering that Miss Hodson has appeared but rarely in the genuine drama, her attempt to portray *Imogen* must be accounted creditable enough. But the part of Shakspeare's purest, tenderest, and most womanly heroine demands for its adequate impersonation an actress of genius, or, failing that, one of extraordinary art and cultivation. In the earlier portions of the play Miss Hodson was deficient in dignity and passion—the fine scenes with *Pisanio* being especially feeble—her gestures were too unvaried, and her speeches were too persistently addressed to the audience. The later scenes are less taxing, and here the actress was seen to more advantage, wearing her boy's dress and assuming the character of *Fidele* with intelligent discretion and grace.

XLVII.

“VIRGINIUS.”

[Queen's Theatre.—April 1872.]

THE revival of Sheridan Knowles's “*Virginius*” will probably be found to interest a considerable class of playgoers. It is true that tragedy has almost departed from our stage, and that the audiences of to-day have apparently lost their

predecessors' aptitude for finding entertainment in tearfulness, while the tragedians have perhaps, as a consequence, become something like an extinct species of performers. But "Virginius" occupies an exceptional position in the dramatic repertory. The work has claims to be accounted the most popular of modern tragedies. It established the reputation both of its author and of Mr. Macready—the actor who first sustained in London the part of its hero. It obtained a long career of success, and a measure of fame sufficient to withstand many years' wear and tear. "Virginius" is, indeed, half a century old. It was originally written for Edmund Kean, whom Knowles had first met at Waterford about 1813, when both were strolling players. But in 1820, when the dramatist tendered his tragedy to the Drury Lane management, it was discovered that a play dealing with the same subject, and written by Mr. Soane, had already been accepted. So Knowles's "Virginius" was produced at Covent Garden on the 17th of May 1820. Soane's "Virginius; or, The Fall of the Decemviri," was played at Drury Lane a few days later; but notwithstanding Kean's exertions in the leading character, the tragedy wholly failed to please, and was withdrawn after three representations. *Virginius* continued to be one of Mr. Macready's most attractive impersonations to the time of his final retirement from the stage in 1851. The play was occasionally presented at Sadler's Wells during Mr. Phelps's tenancy of that establishment, but some years have now elapsed since "Virginius" has been performed in a London theatre.

Livy's story, it may be noted, has frequently given occupation to English dramatists. Webster's tragedy of "Appius and Virginia" was adapted by Betterton, and under the title of the "Roman Virgin" was produced at the Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre in 1670. Dennis's "Appius and Virginia" was played at Drury Lane in 1709, but with ill-success, although the dramatist had invented for his work a new kind of stage thunder. Garrick appeared as Virginius at Drury Lane in 1754 in a dull tragedy by one Henry Crisp, of the Custom House. In the following year a play called "Appius," written by John Moncrieff, was represented at Covent Garden, with Sheridan in the part of

Virginius. Nor did Knowles's success prevent further dealing with the subject. The tragedy of "Virginie," which in 1845 M. Latour de St. Ybars contrived for Mdle. Rachel, was subsequently adapted to the English stage by Mr. Oxenford for the sake of Mrs. Mowatt, the American actress. In this play, it is to be observed, the character of the hero is altogether subordinate to that of the heroine.

Knowles's tragedy was clearly written in imitation of the works of the Elizabethan dramatists. The Shakspearian view of the Roman populace is freely adopted, while *Virginius* himself is a shadowy reproduction of Coriolanus. The story is set forth with little art, and the scenes seemed to be shifted with unnecessary frequency, the simplicity of the fable being considered. Indeed, some difficulty appears to have been experienced in finding materials sufficient to fill five acts. The earlier scenes excite little interest, being devoted mainly to the course of the loves of *Idilius* and *Virginia*, which runs too smoothly to move much sympathy. The episodic dealing with the fate of *Dentatus* is inefficiently conducted, and in no way strengthens the essential subject of the work. With the immolation of *Virginia* in the fourth act the legitimate conclusion of the story is arrived at, the final scenes, occupied by the insanity of *Virginius* and the strangling of *Appius* in prison, being in the nature of a superfluous epilogue. The tragedy is poetic rather in diction than in thought; many of the speeches are of an eloquent kind, however, if here and there disfigured by tumidity of expression and hyperbolical strainings that rather dislocate common sense. Altogether "Virginius" will perhaps now be generally judged to be a production of an old-fashioned class which has enjoyed a sufficiency of reputation, and must now, the present condition of the English stage being regarded, cease to be counted among acting plays. The vitality of the work has probably always depended upon its one really fine situation, and the extraordinary merits displayed by the original representative of the chief character. But this was at a time when there prevailed among playgoers belief in the virtues of blank verse, when a five-act play was held to be a necessary portion of a theatrical entertainment, and when, moreover, actors were extant skilled in histrionic portraiture of an elevated school.

At the Queen's "Virginius" has the advantage of the support of Mr. Ryder, for some years a member of Mr. Macready's company at Drury Lane Theatre. Mr. Ryder is an accomplished elocutionist, and possesses the physical qualifications necessary to the assumption of heroic characters. He plays the part with great spirit, following closely the method of the original *Virginius*, even to imitating now and then the favourite attitudes and gestures of Macready, and repeating the points and pauses he had established. The great actor's vehement impulsiveness and extreme tenderness could less successfully be reproduced. Mr. Ryder's performance is of a creditable kind, however, and well merited the applause it received. *Virginia* demands of her representative little more than grace of bearing and pathos of expression, and these Miss Hodson proved herself fully competent to supply. Mr. Marston supplies a respectable interpretation of the part of *Dentatus*. To the character of *Idilius*, originally sustained by Charles Kemble, Mr. Rignold brings much zeal and vigour, but his elocutionary deficiencies are deplorable. Of the remaining players there is little to be said of a commendatory sort.

XLVIII.

"MONEY."

[Prince of Wales's Theatre.—March 1872.]

OF Lord Lytton's six plays, "Money" appears to be the most secure of a permanent position in our dramatic repertory, although the popularity of the "Lady of Lyons" certainly manifests no symptoms of immediate exhaustion. Originally presented at the Haymarket in 1840, "Money" has been frequently reverted to by managers, and almost invariably with successful results. The work has now been produced at the Prince of Wales's Theatre under circumstances of an interesting kind. Of late years this establishment has become famous for the refinement and completeness of its representations; but it has subsisted wholly upon

comedies specially contrived by the late Mr. Robertson, a writer who may be described as a dramatic miniature-painter, sure of attaining his ends so long as he confined himself to delicate drawing and choice colouring upon a small canvas. To the limited appliances and dimensions of the Prince of Wales's Theatre Mr. Robertson's system of art was admirably suited. Employed in larger houses it encountered signal disaster. Many years ago Mrs. Fanny Kemble, an excellent critic, in reference to the performance of modern comedy, pointed out that "the smaller the space, consistent with ease and grace of carriage, in which such representations take place, the less danger there is of the actors departing from that natural quiet and refined deportment and delicacy which are the general characteristics of polished society." "Money," however, was originally devised for a large stage, and for actors whose histrionic method was of a broad and forcible kind. Lord Lytton's characters are strongly outlined and vividly coloured; and it was questionable how far such a work could be safely exhibited in the confined arena of the Prince of Wales's, and whether the venture might not resemble an attempt to display a gallery picture in a boudoir. On the whole, however, it may safely be said that by the exercise of much ingenuity and painstaking the management has been enabled to triumph over these difficulties. Sometimes, no doubt, the stage looks rather overcrowded, and the dramatist's recourse to those "front scenes" which force the actors so inconveniently near to the footlights, and which writers for the theatre, following French example, now usually avoid, detracts from the picturesqueness and thorough effect of the representation. "Money" was received with cordial and well-deserved approval, and will probably enjoy a more continuous career of performance than has been accorded to it on any previous occasion during its thirty years' existence.

It has been the aim of the management to modernise the comedy in some respects, and further to reduce its declamatory and didactic tone to a more conversational level. Thus the costumes worn are of to-day's pattern; there is reference to *Punch* in lieu of the caricatures of "H. B.," and telegraphic messages are substituted for

letters sent by post. Certain excisions have been found expedient, notably in regard to the scene of the assembly of *Evelyn's* creditors, when they believe him to be ruined and are urgent for the discharge of their accounts. The incident is easily dispensed with, and indeed it might be as well to go farther in the way of omission and thin the ranks of the players by suppressing altogether the group of tradesmen: for Messrs. *Frantz, Tabouret, MacFinch, Crimson, Patent, and Toke* really contribute little to the support of the story, while on a small stage their presence is felt as a serious incumbrance. The character of *Evelyn* presents difficulties to the modern interpreter. The part was expressly written for Mr. Macready at a time when he was much disinclined to appear in comedy, and was wont to stipulate in his engagements that he should not be required to impersonate *Joseph Surface* even, albeit he had previously won distinguished success in that character. To gratify the actor it became necessary to afford *Evelyn* many opportunities for sonorous elocution and stage occupation of rather a tragic complexion. It has followed that the hero of the play—with his quotations from the poet Cowper, his appeals on behalf of his old nurse, to whom it is not made apparent that he renders any assistance himself, and his frequent comments upon the vices and follies of mankind—is the least natural of the *dramatis personæ*. Great praise is due to Mr. Coghlan for the good taste and judgment he evinces in his assumption of this part. The actor has undergone a sound professional training, possesses a fine voice and an agreeable appearance, and is thus enabled to bring *Evelyn* more within the range of modern sympathies and nearer to the standard of actual nature. The narrative of the hero's misadventures at the university may be cited as a good example of Mr. Coghlan's command of pathetic expression without departure from the subdued methods of speech and demeanour which prevail in modern society. As *Clara Douglas*, Miss Brough's powers are somewhat overtaxed, but the young actress by her grace of bearing and plaintiveness of delivery succeeds in giving interest to the part, if not the full effect of which it is susceptible. A more satisfactory *Georgina Vesey* than Miss Marie Wilton presents could not be desired; and Mrs.

Leigh Murray is sufficiently hearty and humorous as *Lady Franklin*—the part originally filled by Mrs. Glover. Mr. Bancroft is seen to advantage as *Sir Frederick Blount*, depicting the lisping baronet as a kind of dandy Albino—with colourless hair, weak eyes, great imbecility of mien and various costumes of the most recent device. The impersonation has been minutely studied, and afforded genuine entertainment to the audience. Mr. Honey appears as *Graves*—a character he sustained at the Holborn Theatre when “*Money*” was revived there by Mr. Barry Sullivan—and plays with abundant yet well-disciplined humour. *Sir John Vesey* furnishes Mr. Hare with a new occasion for exhibiting his skill in histrionic portraiture. With a suffused face, white hair and whiskers, a restless pomposity of manner, and a plausible geniality that only gives way when selfishness becomes urgent, “*Stingy Jack*” in Mr. Hare’s hands acquires a position of unusual prominence in the comedy. The representation was complete in every respect, and marked by particular ingenuity in the contrivance of byplay and what is called “stage business.” The scenic decorations and arrangements are most admirable; the card-room at the club, with its groups of well-dressed gentlemen, and the drawing-room in *Evelyn’s* house, with its costly draperies and pictures, china and statuary, being triumphs of theatrical art of the kind.

XLIX.

“MEDEA IN CORINTH.”

[Lyceum Theatre.—July 1872.]

THE perfidy of Jason and the wrath of Medea have been frequently exhibited upon the English stage. An adaptation by Charles Johnson of the tragedy of Euripides was presented at Drury Lane Theatre in 1730, but met with an unfavourable reception, owing, it was alleged, to the misconduct of certain “young men belonging to the Inns of Court, who came with a determination to damn the play.” Great

applause was obtained, however, in the part of the heroine by Mrs. Porter, an actress whom Horace Walpole always held to be superior to Garrick in "passionate tragedy." A second version of "Medea," contrived by "Leonidas" Glover, was produced in 1767, when Mrs. Yates sustained the leading character with remarkable success; but, owing to the great fatigue involved in the representation, the lady declined to repeat her efforts except upon her benefit nights and other special occasions. The same reason probably induced Mrs. Siddons to refuse an application made to her by some members of Mr. Glover's family that she would undertake a part for which indeed she must have possessed singular qualifications. She pleaded, however, that she had no voice in the management of the theatre, and was not at liberty to select parts in which to appear. Glover's play seems to have been performed at intervals down to 1792, when it was produced at Covent Garden Theatre for the benefit of Mrs. Pope. The "Medea" of the modern stage is due to the tragedy written by M. Legouv   expressly for Mdme. Rachel, who, strange to say, disparaged and declined to appear in the work. Translated into Italian, however, the play in the hands of Mdme. Ristori achieved signal success. It was presented at the Lyceum Theatre in 1857, during the first visit of the great actress to this country. In 1862 the American tragedian, Miss Avonia Jones, performed in an English version of M. Legouv  's play at the Adelphi Theatre. Mr. Heraud about the same time prepared an adaptation of "Medea" for his daughter, then engaged as leading actress at the Grecian Theatre. Meanwhile the subject had been converted to the purposes of burlesque by Mr. Planch   and Mr. Robert Brough. Mr. Charles Mathews's admirable performance of the chorus in "The Golden Fleece" will long be remembered by playgoers; while Mr. Robson's extraordinary display of humour and passion in Mr. Brough's extravaganza won the applause even of Ristori herself, at whom the actor's caricature was directly aimed. To the lyric stage, it may be added, the story of Medea has been of essential service. Mayer's opera was brought to London by Mdme. Pasta in 1826, when the genius of the singer obtained for the work a success and a fame far in excess of its merits. Cherubini's "Medea,"

composed for Paris late in the last century, was heard for the first time in England some few seasons back at Her Majesty's Theatre, the chief character being sustained by Mdlle. Titiens.

A new version by Mr. W. G. Wills of M. Legouv  s tragedy has now been produced at the Lyceum Theatre. In the earlier scenes the French original has been closely followed; but the adapter has ventured upon various alterations in the closing incidents of the play. It cannot be said that these changes are altogether of a judicious kind; but Mr. Wills has apparently had in view the tempering of the work to meet the requirements of an English audience, and perhaps, more especially, the suiting of Miss Bateman with a congenial part. Thus unusual stress is laid upon *Medea's* maternal love, and her children are permitted to figure more prominently than heretofore upon the scene: Miss Bateman's theatrical successes having hitherto depended rather upon her skill in expressing tenderness than upon her displays of passionate emotion.

The play is written in blank verse, which now suffers from turgidity and now declines into a homeliness, even a vulgarity of diction, which has a curiously discordant effect in a work of severe and exalted pretensions. "*Medea in Corinth*" was received with customary enthusiasm, but that the play will secure permanent favour can hardly be expected. It is not only that our audiences cannot surrender themselves to the feeling of mysterious solemnity and religious awfulness—"the atmosphere of death rather than of life"—which broods over Greek tragedy; but plays of classical design, of the school of Corneille, have rarely obtained establishment in the English theatre. Even Addison's "*Cato*," an exceptional work of this class, has been lost to the stage for half a century, and upon its last revival by Kemble, in 1811, only obtained toleration by a sacrifice of one of the conditions upon reverence for which the author had particularly prided himself: "unity of place" was abandoned, and the spectators were regaled by a changing of the scenes. Upon the French stage, all its fond cherishing of tradition notwithstanding, classical tragedy in truth expired with

Rachel. The advent of histrionic genius might no doubt revive it, because to genius all things are possible; but genius is as rare and phenomenal on the stage as elsewhere. Legouvé's "*Medea*" subsists but upon the reputation with which it was endowed by Ristori. Miss Bateman has succeeded in one of Ristori's simpler impersonations—the heroine of Dr. Rosenthal's "*Deborah*." She now attempts to cope with Ristori in one of her greatest creations. The result might have been foreseen. Miss Bateman has carefully studied the part, wears her fluent draperies with statuesque grace, moves majestically, declaims with vigour, invests her quieter scenes with great tenderness, and taxes her physical resources even cruelly to give effect to her more vehement speeches. But she is not *Medea*—she is, indeed, nothing like *Medea*. She fails to impress the spectators with a due feeling of awe; her passion is more clamorous than moving, and a suspicion of insincerity attends upon her most urgent endeavours. What uninspired acting may do, Miss Bateman may be said to have fairly achieved; but inspiration of a very subtle nature is indispensable to the representative of *Medea*. *Glauce*, the *Creusa* of M. Legouvé, is sympathetically played by Miss Virginia Francis. Mr. Ryder appears as *Creon*, Mr. Swinbourne as *Jason*, and Mr. Warner as *Orpheus*, their efforts being of a careful and respectable kind.

L.

"A SON OF THE SOIL."

[Court Theatre.—September 1872.]

M. PONSARD'S "*Le Lion Amoureux*," originally presented at the Théâtre Français in January 1866, is a play of speeches rather than of action. The author first achieved fame by his "*Lucrece*," a tragedy written in strict accordance with the rules of the French classical theatre, and hailed consequently by conservative playgoers as a wholesome protest against the innovations and license of playwrights

of the romantic or melodramatic school—MM. Hugo, Dumas, and their disciples. In his subsequent works M. Ponsard, while not disdaining dramatic interest and situation, nevertheless maintained his preference for debate and declamation, was content to develop his fables after a tardy and somewhat laborious process, and so contrived that his characters seemed generally to be less actors than orators. It is to be added that M. Ponsard's polished verses and prolonged tirades are yet well provided with energetic diction and poetic glow. In "*Le Lion Amoureux*," as also in his earlier drama of "*Charlotte Corday*," he has sought to present pictures of Revolutionary life and manners, while yet respecting the integrity of his system of art. "*Le Lion Amoureux*" enjoyed great success in Paris, the chief characters being sustained by MM. Bressant, Delaunay, Coquelin, and Mdle. Madeleine Brohan. The story is simple enough, and deals with that conflict between love and duty which has so often furnished occupation to the dramatists. The earlier incidents are supposed to occur in Paris during the third year of the first French Republic. An austere Revolutionary soldier, a member of the Committee of Public Safety, permits himself to be captivated by the charms of a Royalist lady. He had been born a peasant's son upon her father's estate. She seeks him to ensure the safety of her relatives proscribed as enemies of the Republic. In her plan for softening and ensnaring the heart of the fierce Republican general her own affections become entangled. Her union with her proletarian lover is impossible, however. The "lion" rages under the pangs of despised love and baffled hope. He is appointed to the command of a division of the Revolutionary forces, and overcomes the army of the émigrés and their English allies at Quiberon. Again he has his mistress and the lives of her Royalist relatives at his mercy. He acts generously towards his fallen foes, his magnanimity wins for him the lady's hand, and the play concludes happily.

Mr. H. C. Merivale has provided the Court Theatre with an adaptation of M. Ponsard's drama. The English version of "*Le Lion Amoureux*" is called "*A Son of the Soil*," an ill-chosen title, seeing that a novel so called—dealing with a very different theme, however—has been

recently published. For some strange reason the adapter has also changed the name of M. Ponsard's hero. The "lion" of the original play is the historical *General Humbert*, a name of memorable interest to English ears in connection with the French descent upon Ireland in 1798. M. Ponsard has not pretended to accuracy in dealing with the facts of Humbert's character and career, but the hero's name might as well have been preserved. In the English play he appears as *Louis Martel*, a fictitious personage. Otherwise Mr. Merivale may be said to have accomplished a difficult task with creditable skill. He has reduced M. Ponsard's five acts to three, although this feat has not been achieved without recourse to "carpenter's scenes," such as are held in abomination by all French dramatists of distinction. Further, omitting superfluous characters—and among these must be counted no less a figure than that of General Bonaparte as he appeared in 1795—and freely condensing the diffuse speeches of the original, he has produced a coherent and effective play, written in fluent and yet vigorous blank verse. The comic relief afforded by the little part of *Ceres*, the Revolutionary vivandière of the original drama, he has dispensed with, and a certain oppressiveness, the result of repetitional situations and deficient action, he has been unable wholly to avoid. But the work is found to interest numerous audiences, notwithstanding that in many respects it stands somewhat outside the range of ordinary sympathies. The stern, fierce, woman-hating *Humbert* or *Martel* is not a very attractive character, and his austere purity is felt to be rather insincere when he is seen to be so speedily enslaved by the *Duchesse d'Armine*, whose coquetry in the first instance appears a trifle too systematised and premeditated to be very admirable. Moreover, the *merveilleuses* and *muscadins* of the declining Republic, the allusions to *bals à victime*, the assumption of quasi-classical draperies, Grecian tunics, gilded sandals and zones, by the guests of *Mdme. Tallien*—presumably the notorious *La Cabarus*—and the minor bickerings of the Royalists and Revolutionists, however true to the times portrayed, are somewhat mysterious matters to the ordinary British playgoer. However, if the play was to be adapted at all, its special

characteristics in this regard could not be escaped. Bearing in mind the conditions of his undertaking, Mr. Merivale has certainly acquitted himself well.

The performance of "A Son of the Soil" is not of course comparable to a representation at the Théâtre Français, but no pains have been spared at the Court Theatre to give due effect to the drama. Mr. Hermann Vezin plays the hero at least as well as any actor now on the English stage could sustain the part. His declamation may lack force and variety somewhat, but he is always earnest and fervid and commendably absorbed by the business of the scene. His efforts well merited the cordial applause they obtained. Mr. Bishop is unable to give sufficient weight and dignity to the character of *General Hoche*, and Mr. Fisher in the part of the *Count de Valmont*, "created" by M. Delaunay, displays liveliness of rather an amateurish kind. The heroine, called *Beatrice, Duchesse d'Armine*, in the English drama—she is the *Marquise de Maupas* according to the text of M. Ponsard—is impersonated with grace and intelligence by Miss Ada Dyas. In the later scenes the actress manifests considerable command of pathetic expression, notwithstanding a certain hardness of intonation she is probably unable to control.

LI.

"CHARLES I."

[Lyceum Theatre.—October 1872.]

A TRAGEDY called "Charles I.," written "in imitation of Shakespeare," by William Havard, an actor who subsequently served under Garrick's management, was represented at the theatre in Lincoln's-Inn-Fields in 1737, and although a production of inconsiderable merit, absurdly unlike a play of Shakespeare's except that it was in five acts and blank verse, it kept possession of the stage for many years. John Kemble personated the hero of this tragedy at Dublin if not in London, and De Quincey had probably

the work in mind when he referred to its theme as unfitted for dramatic use from its needing "the simplicity of a poetic interest," from its being "too domineeringly political," and because "the casuistic features of the situation were too many and too intricate." Otherwise, he admitted that King Charles, by reason of his personal character and misfortunes, might fairly be presented as "an object of tragic sympathy." A later play, dealing with the life and death of Charles I., was written by Miss Mitford, but it incurred the displeasure or excited the political suspicions of the licenser; its performance at the patent theatres was accordingly prohibited, and it expired, making little sign, after some few representations at the Coburg. Since, the King can hardly have appeared upon the English stage except as a subordinate figure in Mr. Browning's tragedy of "Strafford." In Paris, when the adaptation of M. Dumas's "Vingt Ans Après" was at the height of its popularity, Charles I. was recognised as one of the most impressive characters in the drama.

Wonderfully as, for the purposes of his fiction, M. Dumas manipulated the events of English history, his example has been almost exceeded by Mr. W. G. Wills in the new poetic tragedy of "Charles I." he has contrived for the Lyceum Theatre. The work is in four acts and written in blank verse, which, if of rather unmelodious quality, is yet remarkable for its vigorous and resonant English, for fervour of expression and much felicity of thought. But Mr. Wills's treatment of his subject is certainly curious. A playwright dealing with matters of fact has the advantage of pleading his fidelity as a chronicler if he is found to be dramatically dull, while he may urge the necessity of securing theatrical animation and effect as an excuse for any departure from historical accuracy. Unfortunately, it must be said that Mr. Wills, while faithless as an historian, is weak to insipidity as a dramatist. His play is loosely constructed, and is destitute of any pretensions to sustained interest. It consists of four unconnected scenes, culled, as it were, by chance from some wholly fabulous account of the Great Civil War. The *King* is shown at Hampton Court, in his Cabinet at Whitehall, in the Scottish camp at Newark, and on the threshold of the scaffold. He is por-

trayed as a prince of guileless character, uxorious, devoted to his children, and fully possessed of those physical gifts and advantages of costume which Lord Macaulay held to account sufficiently for his popularity with later generations. Of his sins against his people, of his perfidy and tyranny—even as possible accusations—no word is breathed. The *Queen* rivals her husband as an exemplar of all the virtues. *Cromwell* is painted from the point of view of a Tom d'Urfey or a Roger Wildrake. He is the gross hypocritical, self-seeking villain of conventional melodrama. The other characters are but shadows. The *Lady Eleanor Darys* is the Queen's confidante, much troubled with astrological maunderings; the *Marquis of Huntley* is to the last faithful to his royal master; the *Lord Moray* betrays him to the Parliamentary general; Ireton is a kind of "second murderer," Cromwell being the first. The play is mainly occupied with a sublimation of "the royal martyr," reasonable enough in a Cavalier writer of the time, but in a modern author, with a History of England at his elbow, hardly to be tolerated. It may be, however, that Mr. Wills's sole aim has been to produce a showy part for the popular actor Mr. Irving, who impersonates *Charles I.* But even accepting this view of the dramatist's labours, it is apparent that *King Charles* is weakened in theatrical importance exactly in proportion as the characters surrounding him are robbed of their due significance. If dramatic interest is to be generated by the King's collision with Cromwell, for instance, it is indispensable that both parties to the strife should be credited with motives of some elevation, or, at any rate, that neither should be subjected to unwarrantable degradation. Here we have only what is called "a one-part play," to the full as inartistic and unsatisfactory as productions of its class usually are. It is to be added, however, that "Charles I." met with a cordial reception from the audience. A certain measure of success is fairly due to the literary ability it manifests—a quality independent of its author's want of skill as a dramatist and perverseness as a historian. Moreover, the play is liberally provided with scenery and costumes, while its method of performance presents many stimulants to curiosity.

As Charles I. Mr. Irving finds no such dramatic opportunities as were permitted him in the adaptation of "*Le Juif Polonais*;" but the actor has made a careful and intelligent study of his part, and if in the earlier scenes he is somewhat constrained and artificial, deficient in repose and dignity, his peculiarities of speech, gait, and gesture being allowed undue prominence, he succeeds thoroughly in his rendering of the concluding passages of the play. The *King's* speech to *Moray*, his betrayer, is delivered with marked subtlety, while the parting interview with his wife and children is replete with deep yet unforced pathos. The situation in itself, however, is of so touching a nature that it could scarcely fail in its effect, even though entrusted to a performer of far inferior capacity. Mr. Irving is heedfully costumed in accordance with the famous portraits by Vandyke, and his appearance upon the stage is singularly picturesque. His exertions were rewarded with most hearty applause. Miss Isabel Bateman is somewhat overtaxed by the part of *Queen Henrietta Maria*, but the young actress evinces considerable improvement in her art, and in her quieter scenes was especially successful. Her foreign accent might certainly be dispensed with as a futile tribute to realism. A Queen who expresses herself in English blank verse should surely be allowed to speak like an Englishwoman.

LII.

"AMOS CLARK."

[Queen's Theatre.—October 1872.]

MR. WATTS PHILLIPS has founded a drama upon his novel of "*Amos Clark*," published some years ago. The main events of the story are supposed to occur at Taunton in 1685, immediately after the battle of Sedgemoor, and the complete wreck of the Duke of Monmouth's rebellion; but although the play thus acquires a certain historical flavour, and allusions to Judge Jeffreys and other real personages embellish many of its scenes, the characters, with the single

exception of *Colonel Percy Kirke*, "of the Tangier Regiment," are the creations of the dramatist, and their proceedings are altogether fictions of his contriving. An introductory act or prologue exhibits *Amos Clark*, the hero of the drama, as a youth of seventeen, listening to the death-bed confession of his mother, *Mistress Alice*. In this wise the audience learn that Amos is the son of one *Sir Arthur Clavering*, Baronet, the owner of Clavering Hall, and a fine estate in the neighbourhood of Taunton. It is not clear that the parents of *Amos* had ever been lawfully married; in any case *Sir Arthur* had long since abandoned *Mistress Alice* and her child, and bestowed the title of *Lady Clavering* upon another lady, who has presented him with a son, generally recognised as his heir—*John Clavering*. *Amos*, at the conclusion of his mother's narrative—which, it must be said, has its moments of tediousness and is rather lengthy than lucid—vows to avenge her wrongs and to make himself master of the Clavering estates, which he conceives to be his rightful inheritance. After a lapse of years the story is resumed; *Sir Arthur* is dead, and *Amos Clark* has accepted the post of secretary to *Sir Robert Clavering*, the brother of the late baronet, and, by some strange perversion of law, the inheritor of his title and estate, although *John Clavering* is still living, to say nothing of *Sir Arthur's* other son, *Amos*. *Sir Robert* is an irascible old gentleman, hotly espousing the side of *King James* in opposition to "*King Monmouth*," and in years past noted for his hostility to *Mistress Alice* and her child. *John Clavering* having taken part in the rebellion, is now liable to arrest and instant execution at the hands of *Colonel Kirke*; but the young man has been secreted by *Amos* behind a sliding panel in Clavering Hall, much after the manner of the hiding of *Jasper Carew* in Mr. Tom Taylor's "*Sheep in Wolf's Clothing*." *Sir Robert* is so ardently loyal that he would willingly surrender his nephew to justice if he could only discover *John Clavering's* place of concealment. Presently the fugitive betrays himself. He is in love with *Sir Robert's* daughter *Mildred*, and often emerges from behind the panel to interchange tender speech with her. Permitted to sever with his dagger and possess himself of a lock of the lady's hair, he is so careless as to

leave upon the hall table the weapon, bearing inscribed upon its hilt his name, if not his address, in full. Discovering this dagger, *Sir Robert* fiercely upbraids his secretary, *Amos*, for aiding and abetting the escape of the rebel. A scene of violent invective and recrimination ensues. *Amos* avows himself the son of the late baronet, and eventually slays *Sir Robert* with *John Clavering's* dagger. Evidence fully sufficient for the stage is thus provided to charge *John* with his uncle's murder. He is now pursued both as an assassin and a rebel. Meanwhile *Amos* forges a will in his own favour, and proceeds to take possession of the whole of *Sir Robert's* property. But *John*, unable to endure the accusation of murder, refuses to make good his escape, and voluntarily gives himself up to justice. Thereupon *Amos*, moved by the perilous position of his half-brother, and the anguish of *Mildred*, whom he has himself long loved in secret, confesses his guilt, and is shot in lieu of *John* by a file of *Colonel Kirke's* troopers. Upon this catastrophe the curtain falls.

This is a sombre story enough, but it is by no means deficient in dramatic interest, while it provides a series of situations that are most effective in performance. But the play is constructed with little art, and wears a confused and clumsy air from the frequent interruption of its action in order that room may be found for a host of subordinate characters, and the introduction of much extraneous matter. *Amos* is somehow connected with a very wearisome crowd of highwaymen and gipsies, who continually occupy the scene, but whose mission in the story it is hard to discover. In the same way a numerous group of *Sir Robert's* kinsmen frequently appear and disappear with no other result than the extreme distress of the audience. The murderer and forger *Amos* is hardly a hero to whom much sympathy can attach. Even if his desire to avenge his mother's betrayal is to be leniently regarded, his plan of action in this respect is too vague for general comprehension. His murder of *Sir Robert* was apparently unpremeditated, while his forgery of the will, to the disinheritance of the innocent *Mildred*, is as gross and heartless a crime as well could be. Many of the defects of the play are, no doubt, attributable to the fact that it is an adaptation of a novel. Much that is unin-

telligible on the stage would probably be obvious and reasonable enough in perusal. And with all its faults "Amos Clark" has the merit of that force which has rarely been absent from Mr. Phillips's dramatic productions. The play is vigorously written, the chief characters are clearly defined, and when they are brought into collision it is after a most emphatic and unflinching fashion. The playwright is often diffuse, but in his serious passages he is never flimsy. In comic dialogue he is less successful. "Amos Clark" was received with a favour which probably will be enhanced on its further representation, pains having been taken meanwhile to clarify the fable and to disencumber it of redundant talk, characters, and incidents. *Amos* is played with much spirit and intelligence by Mr. George Rignold, who, if he could only acquire certain of the graces of his art, should be able to take high rank as a representative of the heroes of melodrama. Mr. G. F. Neville appears as *John Claverling*, and Mr. Ryder is a sufficiently vehement *Sir Robert*. Miss Wallis invests the part of *Mildred Claverling* with considerable grace and pathos.

LIII.

"AMPHITRYON."

[Court Theatre.—November 1872.]

DRYDEN'S five-act comedy of "Amphitryon; or, The Two Sosias," was first performed at the Theatre Royal in 1690. It was an adaptation of Molière's "Amphitryon," a comedy in three acts, derived from Plautus, and originally produced in Paris in 1668. Dryden dealt very freely with the French text, adding an underplot and introducing the new characters of Phædra and Judge Gripus. "It was thought proper," writes Bonnell Thornton in his translation of Plautus, "to distinguish the serious from the tragic parts by giving the first in verse and the other in prose, which it may be feared has led him into such low and farcical stuff as neither his Latin nor his French original betrayed him into." Purcell

provided an overture and musical accompaniments; the cast comprised the *Jupiter* of Betterton, the *Alcmena* of the famous Mrs. Barry, the *Phædra* of Mrs. Mountford and the *Sosia* of Nokes; and altogether "Amphitryon" seems to have achieved great success, and to have maintained its place in the dramatic repertory for many years. Molière himself, it may be noted, had been the original *Sosia*, and his wife the first *Alcmena*. In 1756 Dr. Hawksworth revised Dryden's text, which probably by this time had been found greatly to need expurgation, and added new music to the play, without, however, effecting any material change in the nature of the story. In this rectified form, "Amphitryon" enjoyed a new popularity. In 1826 "Amphitryon" was reduced to two acts, and presented at Drury Lane in order that La Porte, the French actor, might appear upon the English stage in the part of *Sosia*; but the performance was wholly unsuccessful. Since this luckless experiment "Amphitryon" has been left undisturbed, included in the long list of old plays held to be unsuited to the stage of the present. Now, however, Mr. Oxenford has ventured upon a careful rearrangement of the work, with a view to its representation at the Court Theatre. But it has been felt that something more was necessary than such a correction of the dialogue as contented Dr. Hawksworth in 1756. Not merely the superstructure, but the very foundation of the play, has therefore undergone disturbance.

In this new version of "Amphitryon" the introductory scene, in which Mercury requests of Night that she will prolong her reign as a matter of convenience to Jove, is dispensed with. In lieu, Jupiter, from the skies, addresses the audience, commencing his speech with the prosaic "Ladies and gentlemen" of conventional oratory, imploring them to dismiss from their minds all that they may have previously gathered from Lemprière as to the story of Amphitryon, for its facts are about to be changed to suit new formulas, and especially warning them that the entertainment to be provided will not be in the nature of a burlesque. The action of the play takes place by daylight throughout. *Alcmena* is the betrothed, and not the bride of *Amphitryon*. *Jupiter* comes to earth to amuse himself with stirring a lover's

jealousy by assuming for a while his place and aspect, and to indulge in harmless, if insipid, flirtation with the beautiful *Alcmena*. All mention of the paternity and origin of *Hercules* is, of course, forborne. Presumably, the history of that demigod, as it has been hitherto related, is to be viewed as false and libellous. Having sufficiently enjoyed himself in rather an idle and vacuous way, Jupiter undeceives his dupes, and resumes his seat in the skies; the lovers are reunited, and the play terminates comfortably. "Amphitryon" is thus rendered an inoffensive work enough, but it must be confessed that it has been purged to an extent that is rather baneful to its constitution. With its sins against decorum much of its sense and substance have also unavoidably been ejected, and the result is attenuation and infirmity of rather a perilous kind. Whether the audience would have endured a more faithful rendering of a familiar fable, protected somewhat by its classical character, can hardly be affirmed; but it is certain that cleansing a work of this order is very like "restoring" an old picture: removal of the dirt involves the loss of much that is of worth and interest. However, even in its present eviscerated form, "Amphitryon" is far from an unamusing production, and if weak as a drama, is attractive as a theatrical curiosity. Care has been taken to preserve good examples of Dryden's verse, and these skilfully recited can scarcely fail to gratify an audience. The opportunities of hearing Dryden in a theatre have become very rare, and the fact in itself entitles this venture at the Court to respect and commendation. "Glorious John" was probably last represented upon the stage when Macready revived "King Arthur" with Purcell's music at Drury Lane some thirty years ago. Moreover, the performance at the Court presents many attractive features. Mr. Righton's *Sosia* is as genuine an exhibition of comic acting as can now be seen in London; the actor plays with well-disciplined and yet abundant humour, and delivers his droll speeches with excellent point and effect. Miss Litton is a most sprightly and graceful representative of the avaricious waiting-maid *Phædra*, and Mr. Steyne is an efficient *Mercury*. Mr. Vezin declaims with elocutionary skill in the part of *Jupiter* if he fails to distinguish sufficiently the disguised from the real character

of the King of Heaven, who should hardly be presented throned above wearing the helmet and arms of Amphitryon. Miss Dyas is a competent *Alcmena*; Mr. Fisher appears as the true *Amphitryon*, and Mrs. Stephens is a humorous representative of *Sosia's* wife, *Bromia*. The two *Amphitryons* and the two *Sosias* are ingeniously dressed and made up to render mistakes as to their identity credible enough for stage purposes. In the Roman theatre, the actors wearing masks, the difficulty must have been to present them sufficiently unlike each other for the due information of the audience. Indeed, in the original prologue Mercury is careful to state that in order that he may be distinguished from the real *Sosia* he purposes to wear feathers in his cap. Purcell's music has not been revived; the songs and dances are omitted, and in lieu of the original prelude Gluck's overture to "Iphigen in Aulide" is performed by the orchestra. The scene, painted by Mr. Hann, represents the exterior of Amphitryon's house at Thebes, and remains unchanged throughout the play.

LIV.

"FALSE SHAME."

[Globe Theatre.—November 1872.]

THE hero of Mr. F. Marshall's comedy of "False Shame" is a certain *Arthur, Lord Chilton*, the only son of the *Earl of Dashington*, a young gentleman whose humour it is to despise the world's opinion, and rather to incur its condemnation than to trouble himself with setting it right. The character has been ingeniously conceived and adroitly demonstrated, and upon its merits in this regard depend the play's main claims to success. To the elegant impassibility of *Sir Charles Coldstream, Lord Chilton* unites something of the misanthropy of *Timon of Athens*. Active and excitable, he affects a dandified indolence and apathy; brave, he is quite content to be thought a coward; generous and beneficent, he shrinks from the possibility of being

exhibited on that account as deserving of popular applause. It has long since been decided by family arrangement that he is to marry *Miss Magdalen Atherleigh*, an heiress, to whom he is sincerely attached. *Miss Atherleigh* is one of those heroines of poetic tastes and romantic aspirations who from the time of Steele's *Biddy Tipkin* have often figured upon the stage. Dreaming of chivalry and knight-errantry, the lady is shocked at the apparent coldness and the prosaic conduct of her lover. She fails to perceive his real worth, while he disdains to depart from his chosen method of life for the sake of her enlightenment. Much to his disadvantage, therefore, she contrasts his negligence with the ardent protestations and devoted wooing of one *Ernest Bragleigh*, who boasts an Italian origin and professes a passionate nature in harmony with the scene of his birth, but who is in truth a calculating adventurer seeking the hand of the heiress with a view to possessing her fortune. In the course of a picnic at Rowan Ghyll Falls, Cumberland, *Miss Atherleigh* is accidentally plunged in the stream. In a state of insensibility she is rescued by *Lord Chilton*, who having made sure of her safety, abruptly departs to avoid all thanksgiving upon the subject and to escape any charge of heroism that may arise from his proceedings. He has previously, however, possessed himself of one of the lady's rings, leaving in lieu of it a ring of his own. In the absence of her real preserver *Bragleigh* boldly attributes to himself the rescue of *Miss Atherleigh*, and thus establishes a new claim to her affection. This he enhances presently by stealing from *Lord Chilton* the ring he had taken from the lady while she remained unconscious. In this way *Bragleigh* hopes to prove fully that he is the hero he has represented himself. His theft of the ring, however, has been witnessed by a young lady named *Constance Howard*, a friend of *Miss Atherleigh*, who has had the wit to discover *Lord Chilton's* genuine character. In due course the villain is exposed, and a charge of felony hanging over his head, he is constrained to make humble apologies for his misdeeds, and especially to *Lord Chilton*, upon whom he had heaped many unwarrantable insults from a belief that his lordship was of too timid a nature to resent them. *Bragleigh's* challenge to fight a duel had previously been accepted by *Lord*

Chilton, with a stipulation that the combat should be fought with swords in Chilton Park, the nobleman alleging that if he is to outrage the laws of God and man he prefers to do so upon his native soil—a curious sentiment that for inexplicable reasons seemed greatly to commend itself to the favour of the gallery. The villain discomfited and removed, and *Lord Chilton's* real nature effectually manifested, *Miss Atherleigh* renounces her prepossessions concerning the romance of the past, and the curtain descends comfortably upon her union with her noble lover.

"False Shame" is hardly to be accepted as a picture of real life, and here and there is somewhat crudely constructed. Certain of the incidents seem to be contrived with insufficient art, and occasionally the complications of the fable are unduly obscure. But the play is interesting and thoroughly effective in representation. Mr. Marshall indeed has, upon the whole, accomplished his task carefully and conscientiously. He portrays character with skill, and has spared no pains to perfect his dialogue, which is at all times neat and sprightly, and often genuinely humorous. Considering that this is his first dramatic essay of any pretence, it must unquestionably be pronounced a work of something more than promise. An audience who could fail to find sound entertainment in such a play must surely be difficult to please; and dramatists who rely upon their own inventiveness, and labour with a due sense of artistic considerations, are too rare for Mr. Marshall's merits of this kind to be allowed to pass unrecognised. The play was very cordially received; the second act, in which the author's ingenuity is seen at its best, winning unusual applause. Mr. Montague assumes the part of *Lord Chilton* with excellent effect. The actor has thoroughly mastered the difficulty of repose and unconsciousness upon the stage; his manner is throughout natural and quiet, while he yet succeeds in duly impressing and interesting his audience, and delivers the witty speeches with which he is entrusted with admirable dexterity and intelligence. Miss Massey is rather overtaxed by the part of *Magdalen*; the lady does not lack force or spirit, but her acting has too melodramatic a manner, and is deficient in discipline and refinement. The minor characters are well sustained. Mr. Garden and Miss

Larking are vivacious and amusing in the parts of a hen-pecked colonel and his wife; Mr. Billington invests the villain Bragleigh with adequate significance; and Miss Carlotta Addison personates gracefully and intelligently *Miss Constance Howard*, who is provided with a lover in *Mr. Percy Gray*, a lieutenant in "the Royal Buffs," satisfactorily represented by Mr. Charles Neville.

LV.

"CROMWELL."

[Queen's Theatre.—December 1872.]

It may be presumed that Colonel Richards's five-act play of "Cromwell" has been produced at the Queen's Theatre by way of "counterblast" to the Lyceum tragedy of "Charles I." The absurd apotheosis of the King having proved successful at the one house, it has been judged that a drama aiming at the glorification of the Lord Protector might win applause at the other. The result, however, has disappointed expectation in this respect. The play failed to please. Colonel Richards does not, it is true, outrage history and common sense so glaringly as Mr. Wills does at the Lyceum; but "Cromwell," first published, we believe, many years ago, seems to have been originally devised rather as a rhetorical poem than as a stage play; in any case, its absolute unfitness for theatrical purposes became manifest within a few minutes after the rising of the curtain. The lack of sustained interest or continuous narrative may not be fatal to a play purporting to deal with historical events; and if the author had been content to occupy the scene with a few effective pictures from the life of his hero, the audience would probably have overlooked his imperfect knowledge or his neglect of the laws of dramatic composition. But unfortunately Colonel Richards has so encumbered himself with materials, has marshalled his incidents so clumsily, has so crowded the stage with ill-defined characters, and

entrusted them with so many prolix speeches and redundant dialogues, that weariness, perplexity, and depression afflicted the spectators at a very early period of the performance. Unable to approve, and yet anxious for amusement, they sought and found opportunities for expressing their derision, and visited upon the players the defects of the play. Further, they formed themselves into two parties, hissing or cheering accordingly as the sentiment expressed by the characters were Royalist or Republican. Under these painful conditions the play dragged on for some four hours; at its close all concerned were sufficiently exhausted. In the first scene *Cromwell* is discovered living with his family at St. Ives, much disturbed at the issue of the writ of Ship-money. He discusses the state of the country with his friends *Ireton*, *Bradshaw*, and *Harrison*, and resistance to the royal mandate is determined upon. Presently he falls asleep, and sees in a vision the execution of the *King* in front of Whitehall. That a dream in 1634 should reveal the events of 1649 is certainly remarkable enough; but the vision is effectively contrived and obtained considerable applause. Ten years are then supposed to elapse. *Cromwell's* rough humours with his Ironsides are exhibited and the battle of Marston Moor is fought. Moreover, a vague underplot is developed. Two brothers, *Arthur* and *Basil Walton*, are rival suitors for the hand of Florence, the daughter of *Sir Simon Nevel*. *Arthur* is assisted by *William*, a comic serving-man, who, of course, makes love to *Barbara*, the waiting-maid of *Miss Nevel*, and *Basil* has for confederate a mysterious buccaneer named *Wyckoff*. To this underplot much time and space are devoted, but it never excites interest of any kind, or even acquires intelligibility; it provoked indeed the severest opposition of the evening. In the third act, after a lengthy debate, the King's death is decided upon. The leading incident of the fourth act is *Cromwell's* contemplation of the dead body of Charles, a dim reproduction of Delaroche's famous picture. The concluding passages of the play set forth with most fatiguing elaboration the death of *Cromwell's* daughter, *Mrs. Claypole*, in 1658, and the recognition at home and abroad of the Lord Protector's

triumphs by sea and land. The last scene represents the old palace at Greenwich, with a view of the river, and the British fleet at anchor.

For the reader "*Cromwell*" may perhaps be found to possess more attractions than it presents to the playgoer. Colonel Richards writes blank verse with skill and vigour if his muse oftentimes stands in need of discipline and discretion. But a drama must consist of something more than eloquent and poetic declamation, and it is the misfortune of "*Cromwell*" that the characters become so infected with a passion for high-flown oratory that when they once begin there is no stopping them. Upon the part of *Cromwell* the author has evidently bestowed great care and thought; yet the result is scarcely satisfactory. *Cromwell's* religious enthusiasm is but faintly suggested; and his remorseful meditations upon the death of the *King* in the later scenes are inconsistent with the view of his character which is presented at the outset of the drama. *Cromwell* is then moved only by a strict sense of duty, and the execution is to him a matter of political necessity which cannot be avoided. In the end, he is almost conscious of crime, and forfeits his position as a hero with right and good faith upon his side. The other characters are only feebly portrayed. *Mrs. Claypole*, with her Royalist sympathies—which Mr. Carlyle has declared to be "fudge"—does not arrive at significance, although the scene of her death is not without dramatic value. It occurs so late in the play, however, and is so tediously treated, that it overtaxed the patience of the spectators. *Ireton*, *Harrison*, and *Bradshaw* are very indistinct personages, while the characters introduced to give comic relief—canting soldiers and an unfortunate innkeeper—only succeeded in aggravating the general feeling of despondency. The very arduous part of *Cromwell* is sustained by Mr. George Rignold with unusual force and ability. He delivers his almost interminable soliloquies with untiring energy, and displayed genuine pathos in the scene of the death of *Mrs. Claypole*. Some reform in the costume worn in his later scenes might perhaps be advisable. *Cromwell* should hardly appear in 1658 in the identical dress he had assumed some ten

years before at the trial of the *King*. Mr. Ryder appears as *Ireton*, and Miss Marlborough as *Lady Cromwell*. Mrs. *Claypole* is gracefully and pathetically represented by Miss Wallis.

LVI

"THE WICKED WORLD."

[Haymarket Theatre.—January 1873.]

MR. GILBERT has apparently derived the subject of his new fairy comedy from a story bearing the same name which he contributed to "Hood's Annual" some two or three years ago. The incidents of the play are supposed to occur in a skyey kingdom inhabited by fairies, who from their elevated position in the clouds are enabled to watch and to condemn the proceedings of the mortal world hanging in the ether beneath them. At an early stage of the representation the spectators are informed that each dweller in fairyland has upon earth "a perfect counterpart in outward form," so perfect indeed that even the immortals are powerless to distinguish themselves from their duplicates. This "condition precedent" upon which the fable is based is sufficiently perplexing to the audience, but it has the advantage of economising the strength of the company, and enables certain of the performers to quit the scene as fairies and forthwith to reappear in the character of human beings. The female fairies, finding their state of existence rather monotonously happy, resolve, in exercise of certain magical powers which they possess, to summon to the skies the "earthly counterparts" of two male fairies, *Ethais* and *Phyllon*, who have been despatched by their king upon some mysterious errand to distant regions. The earthly *Ethais* and *Phyllon* are Gothic knights of rude bearing and indifferent morality. They enter brawling and blustering, and disgrace fairyland by their unchivalric conduct. Indeed, as they frankly explain, they believe themselves in the paradise of Mohammed, and view the fairy creatures about them as houris ministering to their

enjoyment. The fairies, however, with one accord fall in love with these coarse roysterers. The introduction of mortal passion into fairyland, and the miseries that thereupon ensue, constitute the chief argument of the drama. *Selenè*, the fairy queen, precipitately yields her heart to *Ethais*, who sets little store upon the gift, and seems attracted more by the charms of a humbler fairy named *Darine*. Between *Selenè* and *Darine* a conflict of furious jealousy arises. Ultimately *Selenè*, rebuking *Ethais* for his ingratitude and inconstancy, so lashes herself into frenzy that she hurls at him one of those highly seasoned maledictions that have become fashionable upon the stage since the success of Miss Bateman's famous cursing scene in "Leah." The mortals, having been the occasion of as much mischief as possible during their stay of twenty-four hours in fairyland, are then sent back to the earth ; and the play concludes rather tamely with a reflection that human love is not for fairies, and that it behoves them to eschew morbid curiosity as to worldly transactions.

As a story, "The Wicked World" displays considerable ingenuity, but it is essentially unsuited for dramatic purposes. Upon the stage it wears the air of laborious trifling, and its lack of action and interest becomes oppressively manifest. The long speeches and conversations of the characters are tedious, and weigh heavily upon a fable of so frail a constitution, while they tend in no way to clear up its obscurity or to render its many small complications intelligible to the audience. To relieve the more serious portions of the drama, or in the hope of fortifying its unsubstantiality, the character of a comic fairy has been introduced ; but the sallies of *Lutin* are not particularly humorous, while his observations upon the nature and results of earthly love are scarcely decorous. Mr. Gilbert's fancy is agile enough, but his imagination seems cold and inert. His fairies are unfairy-like, distinguishable in no degree from the mortal characters, using the same forms of speech, expressing the same modes of thought, and moved by like impulses and sentiments. The *dramatis personæ* throughout are but shadowy, inanimate creatures, who never assert their individuality or attract the sympathy of the spectators. The play is written in blank verse, of a suffi-

ciently fluent character if it be unillumed by poetic thought. The curse delivered by *Selenè* at the close of the second act, though it is little suited to the character of the fairy queen, and is hardly warranted by the conduct of *Ethais*, who has never professed himself a faithful lover, is perhaps the most vigorous and effective speech in the play.

"The Wicked World" had the advantage of zealous and painstaking representation. The performers were perfect in their parts, and strove their best to carry into effect the intentions of the dramatist. But the play provides few opportunities for acting, and depends for success mainly upon declamation. Miss Robertson sustains the arduous character of *Queen Selenè* with unusual ability, bears herself most gracefully, and though cruelly taxed in the matter of prolix speeches, accomplishes these with rare skill. The lady well merited the applause her efforts obtained from the audience. *Darine* is creditably played by Miss Roselle, and *Zayda*, a more sprightly fairy, by Miss Litton of the Court Theatre, who may be specially complimented upon her distinct utterance and upon her pointed rendering of her share in the dialogue. The mortals *Ethais* and *Phyllon* are manfully represented by Mr. Kendal and Mr. Arnott, who, in their picturesque suits of early armour, are impressive figures upon the scene. The part of *Lutin* the comic fairy does not afford Mr. Buckstone much scope for the display of his peculiar humour, but the popular comedian contrived to move merriment at every possible opportunity. It may be well, however, to relieve him of the long prologue in doggerel rhyme he is required to deliver from the clouds at the opening of the play. The speech is superfluous, and is evidently an embarrassment to the actor. The new scene provided by Mr. O'Connor is an ingenious attempt to represent a "Fairy landscape on the back of a cloud."

LVII.

"ORIANA."

[Globe Theatre.—February 1873.]

MR. ALBERY'S new play, or, as he prefers to describe it, "romantic legend," in three acts, deals with certain events supposed to occur in the Happy Isles, wherever they may be, at some remote period, vaguely stated in the programme to be "days gone by," when fairies were still extant, and human life was much subjected to magical and mystical interference. The Happy Isles, their name notwithstanding, are in a somewhat unfortunate condition, for they are ruled by *King Raymond*, a petty Sardanapalus, who has abandoned his virtuous *Queen Oriana*, and devoted himself to vicious courses, crowding his court with disreputable bacchantes and thinly clad dancing girls. The dissolute monarch's neglect of the welfare of his subjects has induced them to revolt against his authority, and one *Oxeve*, a noisy demagogue known as "the people's orator," has resolved upon overturning the throne and seizing the reins of power. Meanwhile *Queen Oriana* leads a solitary life, brooding over the state of the nation and mourning the loss of her husband's affection. Suddenly she is addressed by a certain fairy named *Peep*, who is represented as a cripple, and who promises to aid *Oriana* in winning back her truant lord. *Peep* has her own interests to serve in the matter, for it seems her restoration to health and symmetry depends in some way upon the reconciliation of the *King* and *Queen*. The fairy, after a process of incantation has been accomplished, produces a magical ring endowed with something of the properties of the "little western flower" of the "Midsummer Night's Dream:" whoever wears the ring has the power of stirring love in the first live creature encountered. With the misadventures that attend the fairy's gift and the complications arising therefrom, the play is mainly occupied. The ring is first assumed by *Chloe*, a milkmaid, a reproduc-

tion of Shakspeare's *Audrey* even to her turnip, and she is forthwith loved by the *King*. Presently the *King* secures possession of the magical ornament, and, chancing to view his reflection in a mirror, is straightway absorbed in self-love, having indeed from the first manifested strong predisposition to fondness of that kind. *Flamen*, a portly high priest, and the plebeian *Oxeye* also in turn possess the ring, and find themselves objects of inexplicable affection. In the end, of course, the fairy's bauble finds its way to the hands of *Oriana*, and she is enabled to resume dominion over *King Raymond's* heart; and by this time he has been schooled by adversity, and presumably cured of his profligate tastes, for he has undergone dethronement by *Oxeye*, and the Happy Isles have been the scene of revolution and anarchy. *Raymond* is a fugitive compelled to disguise himself in a peasant's dress to escape the violence of his subjects. But *Queen Oriana*, assuming the armour of her lord, places herself at the head of the royal forces and succeeds in defeating the rebels in a pitched battle. *Oxeye* is punished by transportation to England, where it is stated his incendiary efforts as an orator will be powerless for harm; the crippled fairy is supposed to be healed of her infirmities, and the play concludes happily.

"*Oriana*" is carefully written, partly in rhyme and partly in blank verse, and displays considerable poetic fancy, which may not be especially original, but is yet graceful and pleasant enough in its way. Mr. Albery has apparently studied the fairies of the poets, acquainted himself with nursery lore, and profited by "*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland.*" But he has not thoroughly digested his acquirements in this respect, and has failed to invest his work with coherence or lucidity. Moreover, he has overlooked the important fact that a dramatist must be dramatic, if he would move the interest and win the good opinion of his audience. The fable of "*Oriana*" is obscure and overburdened with small entanglements which tend only to perplexity and weariness. That the play was unsuited to the stage became manifest at an early period of the representation. The author and his creations stood estranged from the sympathies of the spectators from the outset, and the division between them widened more and more as the per-

formance proceeded, until derision and clamour interrupted the later scenes, and the curtain descended upon a condemned drama. Offence was taken at certain political allusions which were not very happily conceived, and bitter ridicule followed passages of a poetical character which were only open to reproach on the score of their being a trifle affected, and would probably in any other case have secured a fair show of approval. But in truth the audience had lost patience, and could no longer restrain their sense of dissatisfaction. The result had its painful aspect in that considerable ability and painstaking had undoubtedly been exhibited by all concerned in the provision of the entertainment. The issue of the experiment might, however, have been foreseen: a play cannot subsist merely upon pretty speeches, unsustained by interest of story or ingenious delineation of character. The rebuke administered by the audience was rude enough, but it had some justification in the circumstances of the case.

The players had but slight chance of distinguishing themselves, the characters they represented being of so shadowy a nature, and they were embarrassed, as it seemed, by the unusual task of delivering long speeches in verse to listless or irritated hearers. Miss Massey plays *Oriana* and presents a picturesque figure alike in her fluent robes of white satin and her suit of antique armour. But the lady's elocutionary method is rather monotonous, and her acting is too plainly artificial. Mr. Montague undertakes the thankless part of the Sybarite king, but appeared ill at ease in an occupation so new to him, incommoded by his strange dress and overtaxed by the large share that devolves upon him of the music with which the drama is embellished. The most effective character is perhaps that of *Peep*, the crippled fairy, played with genuine spirit and intelligence by Miss Carlotta Addison. Mr. Compton gives point and humour to the part of *Oxeze*, the agitator; Mr. Flockton personates a rather dreary Court jester, and Mr. Garden appears as the venerable high priest *Flamen*, who has to endure the absurd wooing of the King, and to be crowned with roses by the dancing girls of the Court. *Chloe*, the milkmaid, is agreeably represented by Miss Hughes. Musical illustrations of a graceful and lively kind have been pro-

vided in great abundance by Mr. F. Clay, insomuch that the play assumes at intervals almost an operatic character, and the orchestral resources of the theatre are severely tried.

LVIII.

"MAN AND WIFE."

[Prince of Wales's Theatre.—February 1873.]

MR. WILKIE COLLINS has prepared a stage version of his novel, "Man and Wife." The subject did not seem to be especially suited to theatrical purposes, since it included many incidents of a painful kind avowedly founded upon events of recent occurrence; moreover, the author, while seeking to interest his readers in an elaborate and most entangled narrative, had engaged in a didactic mission: he strove to demonstrate the defective condition of the marriage law in Scotland, and to laugh to scorn the modern passion for athletic exercises. Nevertheless, Mr. Collins has successfully accomplished the end he had in view, and has proved himself to be a dramatist of unusual ability. His play is no confused transfer to the stage of select scraps and scenes which the spectator has to connect and digest as best he may with such help as he can derive from his memory of the book, but a complete and coherent work, endowed with an independent vitality of its own, and perfectly intelligible to those among the audience unsupplied with previous information upon the subject. The story, though still retaining a certain repellent element, which could scarcely, indeed, be altogether suppressed, is set forth with lucid art, while the author does not relinquish his impeachment of amateur gladiators and the eccentricities of the law of marriage. The drama is in four acts, the scene is laid in Scotland, and the period is supposed to be the present. The opening scene represents a summer-house adjoining the croquet-lawn at Windygates, the country seat of *Sir Patrick Lundie*, a retired Scotch lawyer. The chief characters are here introduced, and the audience are enabled to understand that *Arnold Brinkworth*, a young

officer in the merchant service, is the devoted lover of *Sir Patrick's* step-daughter *Blanche*, that his affections are reciprocated by the lady, and that very urgent necessity exists for the speedy marriage of her governess, *Anne Silvester*, with *Geoffrey Delamayn*, a young man of rude manners and boorish tastes, a devotee of field sports. It is here that Mr. Collins's confirmed inclination to subordinate truthfulness of character-painting to interest of plot unpleasantly asserts itself, and his heroine sustains much loss of sympathy in consequence. That *Anne Silvester* should have fallen a victim to the arts of so graceless a creature as *Geoffrey* is not credible; but the fact has to be conceded as imperatively necessary to the subsistence of the story. Reluctantly yielding to the entreaties of the lady he has betrayed, *Geoffrey* consents to redress her wrongs, and to meet her at the village inn of Craig Fernie, four miles distant from Windygates, in order that they may there declare themselves man and wife in the presence of witnesses, and so effect a marriage binding under the Scottish law. After *Anne* has started for Craig Fernie, however, *Geoffrey* is suddenly summoned to London in consequence of the serious illness of his father. He writes a hurried note to *Anne* informing her of his change of plan, and describing himself as her husband. This missive he entrusts for delivery to his friend *Arnold Brinkworth*, who proceeds to the village inn in *Geoffrey's* stead. Here the first act concludes, and it may be noted that it is admirably dramatic, conducted with much art, and that it moved the interest of the audience in no ordinary degree. The second act is passed at the inn at Craig Fernie, and is of weaker constitution. The humours of the Scotch waiter *Bishopriggs* are redundantly exhibited, and the story moves forward but sluggishly. This is the scene of *Arnold's* entanglement in a supposititious union with *Anne*, and the young sailor certainly connives a little too openly at the requirements of the intrigue when he addresses the lady as his wife in the presence of the hostess and the waiter, and, shrinking from quitting the inn at night, places *Miss Silvester* in a most cruel position, with no other excuse for his inconsiderate conduct than is afforded by the unfavourable condition of the weather. The act closes with the sudden arrival of *Blanche Lundie*

at the inn, but the interesting situation thus brought about is insufficiently developed, and the dramatist seems here to have neglected a valuable opportunity. The scene ends abruptly, leaving a sense of dissatisfaction in the minds of the audience. The third act, after the occurrence of some pleasant love passages between *Arnold* and *Blanche*, is chiefly occupied with *Geoffrey's* discovery that he can evade fulfilment of his promises to *Anne Silvester* by declaring her to be the lawful wife of *Arnold Brinkworth*. The scene in which *Geoffrey* throws off the mask and ventures to insult the woman he has so shamefully wronged is highly dramatic, and excited genuine enthusiasm. An intimation of the ultimate fate of *Geoffrey* is afforded at this period of the story by one *Mr. Speedwell*, an eminent surgeon, who volunteers in rather an unprofessional way an opinion upon the young man's state of health in reference to his taste for violent muscular effort, and predicts for him early disaster. The concluding act is devoted to an informal, and, it must be said, rather an impossible, trial of the question whether *Arnold Brinkworth*, who has in the interval become the husband of *Blanche*, had not in such wise been guilty of bigamy, in that he had previously married *Miss Silvester*. The scene is the picture gallery at Windygates. *Sir Patrick*, notwithstanding the relation in which he stands to *Blanche*, sits as judge; *Geoffrey* is present, attended by his solicitor, and evidence is taken upon oath, objections to the questions put to the various witnesses being duly registered by the president of the private tribunal as though for reference to the decision of a superior court. The production of the letter written by *Geoffrey* in the first act is accepted as sufficient proof of his own marriage with *Miss Silvester*, and *Arnold* is found guiltless of the charge of bigamy. *Miss Silvester's* reputation is thus fairly re-established, but she is yoked with a most unworthy partner. It is suggested, however, that her term of punishment in this respect will be but brief. *Geoffrey*, in the act of threatening his wife with brutal violence by way of revenging himself upon her for the frustration of his villany, is stricken with paralysis. With the doctor's announcement that the athlete's race is nearly run, the drama concludes. It will be seen that there has

been here considerable departure from the arrangements of the original work.

"Man and Wife" is not to be classed among the pleasant plays which have hitherto been the staple entertainments of the Prince of Wales's Theatre, in which wit and sentiment have been dexterously combined, and sketches of the quieter scenes of social life have been cleverly presented. Mr. Collins's play is a production of a more forcible if more gloomy character, with a tendency towards melodrama and a severely tragical catastrophe. Its real interest, however, and the skill with which it is constructed and represented, will probably secure for it a popularity of some endurance. It is well and tersely written, the earlier dialogues being especially noteworthy for their point and vivacity. The performance exemplified the conscientious care and good taste which have invariably characterised Miss Wilton's management. The play had been diligently rehearsed, and the stage arrangements and artifices left nothing to be desired. Mr. Coghlan personates the ruffianly *Geoffrey* with discreet power, and the unfortunate *Anne Silvester* finds a most sympathetic representative in Miss Foote. Miss Wilton is most sprightly and graceful in the part of *Blanche Lundie*, and Mr. Bancroft gives importance to the very subordinate character of the doctor. As *Sir Patrick Lundie*, Mr. Hare is enabled to reproduce one of his established portraitures of a shrewd, sarcastic, and yet kindly elderly gentleman. Mr. Dewar exhibits considerable humour as *Bishopriggs*, the Scotch waiter. *Arnold Brinkworth* is represented by Mr. Herbert, a young performer, who does not spare exertion, but whose art is at present in rather an immature state. The part of *Lady Lundie* is commendably sustained by Mrs. Leigh Murray.

LIX.

"PUT TO THE TEST."

[Olympic Theatre.—February 1873.]

DR. WESTLAND MARSTON's new one-act drama is avowedly an adaptation of "La Malaria," a tragedy written by the Marquis de Belloy, which first appeared in Paris in 1853, when its representation was, for undiscovered reasons, prohibited by the authorities, although it is stated to have subsequently enjoyed "un grand succès de lecture." The subject is derived from the well-known passages closing the fifth canto of the "Purgatorio;" and it may be remembered that Mdme. Ristori, during one of her London engagements, sustained on some few occasions the part of *Pia de Tolomei* in what was probably an Italian version with amplifications of the French drama. The English author has arranged his edition with excellent taste and skill, translating the dialogue and speeches of the original into nervous and resonant blank verse. The period is about the middle of the fourteenth century. The scene represents a room in the castle of the *Count Nello Della Pietra*, overlooking the Tuscan Maremma. Here the cruel husband, maddened by a suspicion that he has been betrayed, imprisons his *Countess*, designing her lingering death from the mephitic vapours of the marshes. In the English play the hapless *Pia's* only fault is that before her union with the *Count* she had beyond recall given her heart to another and been fondly loved in return. For this she is doomed to die; life being offered to her, however, upon one condition—that she will reveal the name of her lover, and yield him as a scapegoat to her husband's cruel revenge. She prefers death; she is, indeed, already mortally stricken, parched with fever, waxing hourly more and more faint and weak. Suddenly intelligence arrives that the chief of the *Tolomei*, the father of *Pia*, with an armed force, is approaching the castle to rescue her from captivity and death. But the *Count* is not to be baulked of his vengeance. He is

learned in chemistry, skilled in the compounding of deadly drugs. He sprinkles poison upon the bouquet of the *Countess*, and ensures her death before help from without can reach her. Still he offers her life once more if she will but betray her lover; for he possesses an antidote to the poison of the flowers. But *Pia* resolutely dies, and makes no sign. The lover's name is not revealed; her secret dies with her. The *Count* then inhales the poison, and falls dead beside his murdered wife, as military music is heard without, announcing the arrival of the *Tolomei* at the castle. Upon this catastrophe the curtain descends.

A story so deeply tragic as the murder of *Pia* can hardly be adequately set forth in a one-act play that occupies scarcely an hour in representation. The spectators are imperfectly prepared for so abrupt a call upon their keenest sympathies, while the players have a corresponding difficulty in surrendering themselves on the instant to the violent emotions of the scene. At any rate, the English stage no longer possesses artists with the whirlwind of passion immediately at their command, able to sound and to dwell upon, as it were, the highest note in their compass without the help of an ascending scale. Yet something of this kind is indispensable in such a play as "*La Malaria*," which indeed wears much the air of the last act of a tragedy. It has no moments of calm, all introductory matter is suppressed, and no time is allowed for that gradual kindling of excitement which is especially of importance in a work of poetic pretensions, exalted by its nature above the ordinary mood and method of thought of a general audience. Before the playgoer, unaccustomed of late years to the performance of tragedy of any kind, has brought himself into harmony with the vehement and woeful tones of the play, the curtain is on the eve of descent. This defect conceded, however, it is to be said that "*Put to the Test*" is constructed with much art, is highly dramatic, and that its closing incidents, comprising the death of *Pia* and her husband, are most impressive. The performance could present but a shadow of the effect the drama is susceptible of in the hands of players skilled in tragic impersonation before a thoroughly informed and

sympathetic audience. Mr. William Rignold displays an abundance of zeal and force in the part of the *Count*; but the actor has little subtlety or real intensity, and omits to suggest the passionate love which, as in the case of Othello, underlies, and indeed generates, *Pietra's* frenzy of jealousy and vindictiveness. As the *Countess*, Miss Cavendish, perhaps judiciously, refrains from any attempt to depict the acute physical suffering, the fevered tremulousness of voice and limb, the poisoned look, the air of despair, which Ristori expended her utmost art in portraying with a completeness that certainly had its distressing side. Miss Cavendish is graceful, refined, and pathetic, declaiming her speeches with marked ability; but there is a deficiency of power and spontaneity in her impersonation. To render with full justice, however, the passionate abandonment and the terrible sufferings of Pia, demands an actress of absolute genius.

LX.

"THE CATARACT OF THE GANGES."

[Drury Lane Theatre.—March 1873.]

WHENEVER a change of entertainment is deemed advisable at Drury Lane Theatre, it is the custom of its present lessee to issue a kind of proclamation inviting public attention to his proceedings, and explaining and extolling the objects he has in view. It seems to be apprehended that in the absence of some ceremonious notification of this kind the managerial arrangements might escape their due share of general observation, although "a flourish of trumpets" has oftentimes been known to prelude the entrance of Tom Thumb. Mr. Chatterton now formally announces that he has been moved to revive the old melodrama of "The Cataract of the Ganges," from "his belief in the judgment of his predecessor, Mr. Robert William Elliston, who produced the drama with unexampled success fifty years ago," and from his desire to test whether an entertainment which attracted thousands to Drury Lane in

1823 will be equally fortunate in 1873. On this latter point there can be no possible objection to Mr. Chatterton satisfying his curiosity, which, if not laudable exactly, is yet innocuous enough; but he may be counselled to confine within reasonable limits "his belief in the judgment of his predecessor," and not to regard "the great lessee," as he was once called, too exclusively as an exemplar. Elliston was, no doubt, a most admirable actor, but he was guilty of many follies, of many vices even, while his career as manager of Drury Lane terminated disastrously in the Court of Bankruptcy within a few seasons of his successful production of "The Cataract of the Ganges." That the play met with great popularity, however, admits of no question. It enjoyed a run of some fifty nights, a most convincing proof of theatrical prosperity half a century ago. It is now presented as the leading attraction of the evening; but it was originally played as an after-piece. On the first night of its performance it followed Milman's tragedy of "Fazio," a solemn and severe work, which perhaps strongly predisposed the audience to regard with favour a production of a livelier and less exacting kind. Moreover, "live horses" and "real water" were then comparative novelties upon the stage of a patent theatre, and the public of that period was afflicted with a ruling taste for equestrian spectacles. In the end both Drury Lane and Covent Garden paid the penalty of the successes they obtained in this way. The fact that they had appropriated the attractions of the minor theatres was employed as an argument for depriving them of their exclusive privileges, and establishing free trade in dramatic exhibitions. The patents were never formally cancelled, but they were thus rendered nugatory.

"The Cataract of the Ganges" was written by W. T. Moncrieff, a skilled playwright, whose works have not retained possession of the theatre, but who in his time enjoyed some fame as the adapter of "Tom and Jerry," and the author of "Giovanni in London" and many other favourite dramas. Moncrieff did not pretend to be more learned than his audience on the subject of Eastern history, life, and manners, but he was content to provide a showy play, in which many characters should appear attired in costumes more or less of an Oriental pattern, many speeches

should be delivered glorifying the flag and deeds of England, and quadruped performers and a tank of water should be effectively employed. The scene is laid at Baroda, but so far as probability is concerned, it might with almost equal justice have been laid at Brompton. *Jam Saheb*, the Rajah of Guzerat, is a member of the Johrejah tribe, bound by their religion to slaughter all their female offspring. Nevertheless *Jam Saheb* has preserved the life of his daughter *Zamine* by disguising the young lady in male dress, and bringing her up as his son. But when *Ackbar*, the Emperor of Delhi, and *Mokarra*, the Grand Brahmin of the Johrejah tribe, have resolved upon the union of the supposed son of the Rajah with *Dessa*, the daughter of the Emperor, it becomes necessary for *Jam Saheb* to confess the misconduct of which he has been guilty. Thereupon *Mokarra*, the Grand Brahmin, takes possession of *Zamine*, and confines her a close prisoner in the Temple of Juggernaut, persecuting her by the proffer of his love. *Jack Robinson*, the servant of *Colonel Mordaunt*, an English officer attached to the Court of the Rajah, attempts the rescue of *Zamine*; but though he makes prodigious exertions, fails to achieve his end. It is *Robinson's* humour to emulate the adventures of Robinson Crusoe, to refer constantly for advice to the narrative of that mariner, and to wear a similar costume of goatskins, without reference to its unfitness for the climate of Baroda. *Mokarra* then secretes *Zamine* in "the sacred wood of Himalaya leading to the Cataract of the Ganges," and upon her persistent refusal to requite his affection orders his attendant priests to burn her alive. From this dreadful fate, however, she is saved by the timely arrival of *Colonel Mordaunt*, a brave but rather wordy soldier in command of the English forces. England has decided that infanticide shall cease in India, and that the life of the Rajah's daughter shall be preserved. The sacred wood of Himalaya is surrounded by the soldiery. But still *Zamine* is at the mercy of *Mokarra* and his priests. Forthwith one *Iran*, a native warrior in the service of the Rajah, mounts upon a white charger, and snatching *Zamine* from the hands of her oppressors, canters gently with her up a flight of stairs down which a moderate shower-bath is musically trickling—this is the famous Cataract of the Ganges.

The playbill describes the easy flight of stairs as "rocky precipices," and the escape of *Iran* and *Zamine* as "thrilling." The Rajah's daughter safe, the British forces, headed by the gallant *Mordaunt*, overpower the Brahmin priests; *Mokarra* is shot dead by *Jack Robinson*; pans of red fire are lighted in the wings and illumine the stage; and the curtain descends upon Mr. Moncrieff's popular melodrama.

It is to be feared that modern audiences, schooled in stage artifices, and familiar even to contempt with startling effects, will find "The Cataract of the Ganges" a far less imposing production than did their grandsires. In fifty years the theatre has much advanced in scenic contrivances, and burlesque has undermined faith in histrionic illusions. Better equestrian dramas than this have been seen by the score. Indeed "The Cataract of the Ganges" is but a "one-horse" spectacle after all. No other quadruped performer appears but the one who bears away a lay figure in *Zamine's* clothes in the concluding scene. At no time could the play have been possessed of any kind of literary worth, nor has it the advantage of providing the actors with effective occupation. It has the merit, however, of brevity, and of being undesignedly but most completely ludicrous. Few more comical things than the crowning situation have been presented upon the stage of late years. The play has been liberally decorated, the costumes are redundantly spangled, swarms of supernumeraries fill the stage, and new scenery has been provided by Mr. Beverly. The music, chiefly borrowed from "Le Cheval de Bronze" and "La Bayadère" of Auber, has been skilfully arranged by Mr. Levey.

LXI.

"TIME WORKS WONDERS."

[Globe Theatre.—March 1873.]

"TIME works Wonders," Douglas Jerrold's best comedy, was originally devised for the unusually strong company assembled at the Haymarket Theatre in 1845, and has

rarely been presented since upon the London stage. The dramatist stirred himself to provide the able actors at his command with congenial occupation, and to apportion them equal shares in the dialogue and situations of his play. In this way he was tempted to overcrowd his canvas somewhat, and to neglect the harmony and distinctness of his design. The subject became unduly subdivided, action was too often halted and interest suspended at inconvenient moments, in order that humorous conversation might be indulged in to excess, and elaborate full-length portraits exhibited upon occasions when far slighter and less pretentious sketches would have amply sufficed. Yet the main theme of the comedy consists of a graceful and ingenious love-story, which is thoroughly effective in representation. *Clarence Norman*, the nephew of a rich baronet, has eloped from Oxford with *Florentine*, a baker's daughter and a parlour boarder at *Miss Tucker's* seminary for young ladies. The fugitives are overtaken at a village inn by the friends of *Florentine*, who is induced to abandon her lover and to return to school. It is explained to her that her union with *Clarence* will but lead to his complete ruin, for he is solely dependent upon the generosity of his uncle *Sir Gilbert*, who will certainly decline to recognise "the baker's daughter" as an eligible partner for his nephew and heir. Five years are then supposed to elapse. *Florentine* has inherited a modest fortune, and lives in retirement with a companion, *Miss Tucker*, her old schoolmistress, ruined by the elopement of her former pupil and the scandal that thereupon ensued. *Clarence* has been abroad, and schooled by his proud and worldly uncle, believes himself thoroughly cured of his boyish love and hardened into philosophic apathy. Chance makes *Sir Gilbert* and *Florentine* acquainted, and the baronet, ignorant of her condition, even of her name, becomes her devoted suitor. Piqued by the coldness of *Clarence*, *Florentine* suddenly consents to become the wife of *Sir Gilbert*, whose generous ardour contrasts forcibly with his nephew's apparent heartlessness. But she finds the sacrifice impossible; she is still faithful to her boy-lover, and resolves upon solitary flight as the only method of escaping from the perplexity of her situation. Meanwhile the love of *Clarence* for *Florentine* reawakens; he

upbraids his uncle for the cruel teaching that has made his life miserable. *Sir Gilbert* withdraws his worldly opinions, and himself instructed by love, bids his nephew marry whom he will, "the baker's daughter" even, if he should find her still worthy of his affection. The conclusion may be readily surmised. The baronet bears his disappointment with the grace of a true gentleman, and *Florentine* and *Clarence* are made happy. The scenes devoted to this portion of the play are conducted with genuine dramatic skill, as the language, if a little artificial now and then, is yet eloquent, nervous, and pathetic. Unfortunately, much interruption occurs from the episodic matter with which the work is encumbered, and which now, in the hands of less competent artists than those concerned in the original representation, is found to be rather oppressive. *Miss Tucker* has a lover in the person of *Professor Truffles*, a needy, itinerant lecturer, who "travelled with the solar system in a deal box, read the school-girls lectures, and taught 'em acids and gases and eccentricity—no electricity;" a humorous character entrusted with many admirable witticisms, but of little real influence upon the events of the fable. Then there are comic servants, *Chicken*, *Florentine's* maid, and *Bantam*, who, from trading in game cocks, has risen to be a valet; the *Goldthumb* family; and *Bessy Tulip*, a pupil of *Miss Tucker's*, who has clandestinely married *Felix Goldthumb*. *Old Mr. Goldthumb* has been a trunk-maker, and thus acquired a curious acquaintance with literature; his studies of classical history have persuaded him that his soft heart is of stoical firmness, and in emulation of Brutus he has shut his door in the face of his son *Felix*. His natural tenderness and his affected severity are in perpetual conflict. The father and son are of course reconciled at last, but the play suffers much meanwhile, and the borders of farce are approached when, to mollify *Mr. Goldthumb* by invoking his superstitious fears, five of the characters pretend that they have been afflicted by similar dreams, and have seen in a vision the death of *Felix* in the course of a tiger hunt. This is the weakest point in the comedy. Nevertheless, the merits of "Time works Wonders" are far in excess of its defects as an acting play; in wit, sentiment, and adroit character-painting it is scarcely to be equalled

by any work in the existing dramatic repertory; and Mr. Montague has done well to revive the comedy, even though the means at his command are not adequate to its complete representation.

The chief infirmity of the performance arises from the actors' lack of skill in delivering the polished sentences and carefully prepared sallies of the author, which should not be hastily uttered as though they were crackers to be got out of hand as soon as may be, lest they should explode prematurely, but should rather be viewed as acute darts to be delicately poised and deliberately levelled, so that they may certainly hit the mark aimed at. As a preliminary, perhaps, the players should make sure that they themselves have mastered the significance of Jerrold's wit, otherwise they can hardly hope to render it intelligible to the audience. Even Miss Carlotta Addison, whose performance of *Florentine* was the most notable feature of the evening, is far too apt to hurry her speeches and to deprive them of their due effect; the actress, however, displayed rare command of pathetic expression, and generally her efforts were marked by much refined intelligence, although she had the misfortune to be yoked with a deplorably incompetent *Clarence Norman*. Mr. Montague, who might have greatly aided the representation by undertaking this really important character, has unluckily elected to appear as *Felix Goldthumb*, influenced probably by the consideration that Mr. Charles Mathews had originally assumed that part. But Mr. Mathews even was unable to redeem *Felix* from insipidity, and Mr. Montague, although he is zealous to excess, is not more successful. Mr. Flockton plays *Sir Gilbert Norman* carefully and well, and Mr. Addison gives good effect to the part of old *Goldthumb*, securing a round of applause by his hearty burst of feeling in the scene of his reconciliation with his son. Miss Larkins is an acceptable *Miss Tucker*; and Mr. Compton, though he misses the more engaging qualities of *Professor Truffles*—who, if an impostor, was at least a plausible and pleasant one—yet renders the part fairly amusing. Miss Massey undertakes the character of *Bessy Tulip*, originally supported by Madame Vestris.

LXII.

"THE FATE OF EUGENE ARAM."

[Lyceum Theatre.—April 1873.]

THE excess of interest and sympathy that has attached to the case of the usher Eugene Aram, hanged at York in 1759 for the murder some fourteen years before of his friend Daniel Clark, a shoemaker, may be attributed to the contrast afforded by the brutality of the crime and a certain cultivation that yet distinguished its perpetrator. A self-taught man, he possessed considerable literary attainments, and during the many years that he escaped arrest and punishment he had been leading a quiet, reputable, and studious life. The murder was of a coarse and commonplace kind enough; if Aram's confession is to be credited, it was prompted by jealousy and revenge; he had discovered that an intrigue existed between his wife and Clark. It was clearly proved, however, that the assassin had appropriated the money of his victim. Both Godwin and Sir Walter Scott are said to have been tempted by the subject, and to have planned, applying it to the purposes of fiction; Hood devoted to it one of the most masterly of his graver poems; and besides dealing with it as a novel, Lord Lytton completed two acts of a poetic tragedy to be called "Eugene Aram." The fragment has been published by way of postscript, in the later editions of the novel. Dramatic versions of Lord Lytton's story came upon the stage shortly after its first issue in 1831, and have from time to time undergone revival. And now Mr. Wills has taken the theme in hand, and contrived a three-act play, written for the most part in blank verse, and entitled "The Fate of Eugene Aram." The author has obviously been moved by Mr. Irving's great success in portraying the remorseful burgomaster of "Le Juif Polonais" to provide the actor with a corresponding part. It may be questioned, however, whether the means have been happily chosen to attain the end in view. The subject is trite, the supernatural agency

so ingeniously employed by MM. Erckmann-Chatrain could hardly be again resorted to, and Mr. Wills is insufficiently skilled and inventive as a playwright to be able to compensate for this deficiency. The result is a play much inferior in interest to "*Le Juif Polonais*," yet resembling it sufficiently to provoke unfortunate comparisons. And Mr. Irving as *Aram* is only enabled to repeat his efforts as *Matthias*, weakened by a sense that they have been previously exhibited under more advantageous conditions.

Mr. Wills's first act is merely introductory. The scene represents the vicarage garden at Knaresborough; and it may be observed that owing to maladroit stage management the players are much incommoded by the too abundant shrubs and hedges introduced to give reality to the picture. *Aram*, a haggard yet impressive figure, is the affianced husband of *Ruth Meadows*, the only daughter of the vicar. An anthem is sung in the neighbouring church, and the lovers interchange fond but subdued and even melancholy discourse. *Aram's* thoughts are occupied less by his affection for *Ruth* than by remorse for the murder committed fourteen years before. A mysterious stranger borrows a spade and pickaxe from the vicar's gardener, pretending a desire to seek geological specimens in St. Robert's Cave. The vicar invites the stranger to the parsonage. The second act is passed in the "home-room" of *Mr. Meadows's* house. Here it may be noted that a modern grand piano is an anachronism, and that the characters assume costumes of too recent a fashion for the date of the story, 1759. In this scene occurs the one and the only dramatic point in the play—the meeting of *Aram* and his old accomplice *Houseman*, the stranger of the first act. The two criminals quarrel and exchange menaces. *Houseman* is a ruffian, bent upon extorting money as the price of his silence. *Aram*, at first confounded and terrified, finds courage in his despair, and proves himself the more cunning villain. Villagers enter, announcing that they have disinterred in St. Robert's Cave the bones of the long missing Daniel Clark. *Aram* denounces *Houseman* as the murderer. The act concludes with a powerful soliloquy, in the course of which *Aram* is horrified by the reflection of his own white and guilty face in the looking-glass. He departs

to inspect the bones of *Clark* in the cave. In the last act *Aram* is discovered couched upon a tombstone, shadowed by a yew tree, in a village churchyard. Unmanned by the spectacle of his victim's remains, he has fled to escape exposure. He is found and tended by the devoted *Ruth*. To her he reveals the story of his guilt. *Clark* was murdered, not for his money, as in Lord Lytton's version of the story, that his assassin might be enabled to benefit mankind by obtaining means to pursue his studies, but because he had cruelly wronged the woman whom *Aram* in earlier life had passionately loved. *Ruth* endures with great fortitude the confession of her betrothed that he is a felon and had formerly been devoted to another mistress, and *Aram* dies on her forgiving bosom, the rising sun illuming the landscape as the curtain descends. It will be seen that the real story has not been very closely followed. With Lord Lytton, Mr. Wills has ignored the circumstance that *Aram*, who was fifty-five at the date of his death, left behind him a wife and a family of three sons and three daughters; and the dramatist, with even less adherence to truth than the novelist, has dispensed with the trial and execution of his criminal-hero, and permitted him to escape at last almost unpunished and undisgraced.

"The Fate of Eugene Aram" is throughout excellently written, and contains numerous nobly poetic and eloquent passages. But it is comparatively oppressive and ineffective in performance, and is in truth less a drama than a prolonged and monotonous recitation; while there is unwholesomeness in the author's persistent endeavour to win commiseration for his hero, and to find excuse for his base conduct in the exalted nature of his sentiments. To invest the part of *Aram* with an air of force, the other *dramatis personæ* are so subdued and enfeebled that they become the merest shadows; yet it is impossible to respect the murderer's penitence from its large leaven of fear for his own personal safety, nor can much interest be extended to his love for *Ruth Meadows*, seeing how greatly he is pre-occupied by the memory of his crime committed on account of a former mistress. Moreover, there is something most repulsive in his final act of selfishness, and his selection of the innocent daughter of the clergyman to be the recipient

of his frightful revelation of sin and suffering. The great literary merits of the play will probably be accepted, however, as compensation for its grave defects as a work of art, its morbid gloom, and its offences against good taste. The part of *Eugene Aram* is sustained by Mr. Irving with a force and intelligence rarely exhibited on the modern stage. The closing scene perhaps suffers from its protraction and over-elaboration; but the actor's self-abandonment to the passion of the situation, his powerful display of anguish and despair, are histrionic achievements of real note. Mr. Irving's very arduous efforts obtained well-deserved and long-continued applause.

LXIII.

"FINE FEATHERS."

[Globe Theatre.—April 1873.]

MR. BYRON'S new comedy-drama of "Fine Feathers" boasts a prologue or introductory act, from which it is to be gathered that the money and estates of a certain *Sir Richard Gaisford* are in the nature of "fine feathers," and that the various persons upon whom in the course of the performance these possessions devolve are consequently to be viewed as "fine birds;" but the author has not cared to present a definite dramatic illustration of the proverb implied in his title, or indeed to occupy himself with much moral teaching of any kind. The work scarcely pretends to be more than a melodrama of the conventional pattern, and almost any other name would have suited it equally well. *Sir Richard Gaisford*, a wealthy baronet, is supposed to have died abroad, greatly to the distress of his steward, one *Griswold*, who, in his employer's absence, has been living riotously at Gaisford Hall, and has embezzled large sums entrusted to his charge. *Griswold* is apprehensive that his accounts will be too curiously examined by the baronet's niece and next of kin, *Miss Ethel Carlingford*, a young lady who has been a governess, and is presumed

to be keenly alive to her own interests. Looking for little mercy at the hands of *Miss Carlingford*, *Griswold* is much relieved when chance reintroduces him to an early friend calling himself *Signor Rumbalino*, the proprietor of a circus, who has a mysterious story to tell touching the late *Sir Richard*. He had, it seems, twenty years before been clandestinely married to a "lady rider" connected with *Rumbalino's* equestrian establishment, but had forthwith for unknown reasons abandoned his wife. She had died in giving birth to a son, who, under the name of *Harry Greville*, had been adopted by *Rumbalino*. The young man had been highly educated, and in the course of his travels on the Continent had made the acquaintance of *Miss Carlingford*. *Griswold*, perceiving that *Harry* is very unlikely to inquire into the defective accounts, at once recognises him as the rightful heir to the Gaisford estates. Indeed *Harry's* title is so well fortified by documentary evidence that *Miss Carlingford* withdraws her claim to the property, designing, however, to enrich herself by becoming the wife of her fortunate cousin. She therefore takes up her abode with him in Gaisford Hall, and her indecorous conduct in this respect entails upon her the just rebuke of *Ruth Rumbalino*, the daughter of the circus proprietor, who has bestowed her affections upon *Harry Greville*, and resents his being appropriated by another. *Miss Carlingford* is indifferent to the charge of unbecoming behaviour, and it is soon apparent that the weak and inane *Harry* will eventually fall a prey to her arts. But *Mdme. Rumbalino*, the mother of *Ruth*, hastens to the aid of her child, and makes an astounding statement. *Harry* she declares to be, in truth, her own son, and *Ruth* the offspring of *Sir Richard* and the "lady rider." The children had been born at the same time, and foreseeing that the future had wealth and happiness in store for the heir to the Gaisford estates, she had in a moment of frenzy placed her own son in the cradle of the baronet's daughter, and had never afterwards been enabled to rectify her deceitful dealing with the babes. *Harry Greville* at once credits *Mdme. Rumbalino's* strange story, and prepares to give up possession of the estates to *Ruth*, while he makes the ill-timed discovery that he had long devotedly loved the heiress, albeit his affections had

been temporarily perverted by the wiles of *Miss Carlingford*. But *Ruth* is not to become mistress of Gaisford Hall without considerable difficulty. *Miss Carlingford* derides *Mdme. Rumbalino's* narrative, reasserts her claim to be *Sir Richard's* next of kin, and invokes legal aid to enforce her rights. An action of ejectment is supposed to be brought, although it is far from clear who are the parties to the suit. But it is shown to be important in support of *Ruth's* title that the case-book of a certain doctor, long since deceased, should be forthcoming. The doctor had been in attendance upon *Mdme. Rumbalino* at the birth of her child, and it is reasonably conjectured that the book will afford valuable information as to the sex of the newly-born infant. After diligent search the precious volume is discovered, and from the curious particulars it sets forth it is generally held to afford substantive proof of *Ruth's* title. But at a critical moment *Miss Carlingford* possesses herself of the doctor's case-book, and after a careful study of its contents determines upon its destruction. Her hand is stayed, however, by the sudden entrance of a mysterious stranger. This is *Sir Richard Gaisford* himself. He still survives, and the fact demonstrates that the contest as to the ownership of his estates has been premature and vain. His motive in allowing the world to believe him dead he does not condescend to explain. He forgives his fraudulent steward, recognises *Ruth* as his daughter, and consents to her union with *Harry Greville*. These matters arranged and *Miss Carlingford* discomfited, *Sir Richard* begs that he may still be considered defunct, and that a veil of mystery may be permitted to rest upon his extraordinary proceedings. In this enigmatic way the drama terminates.

This is, of course, a very absurd story, and unfortunately its wild improbability has brought it no accession of dramatic interest. The characters are but insipid creatures, if exception be made in favour of the scheming *Miss Carlingford*, whose disagreeable nature is sketched, at any rate, with some force. It is to be said, however, that “*Fine Feathers*” seemed to afford complete satisfaction to the audience, and that it was received with an enthusiasm in excess even of the raptures which usually attend first representations. The success of the work is perhaps to be

mainly attributed to its episodic scenes relative to the circus of *Signor Rumbalino*. Mr. Byron displays intimate acquaintance with this portion of his subject, and has treated it in his liveliest manner and with very genuine humour. The character of *Daniel Dole*, the melancholy circus clown, whose only connection with the story consists in a misplaced affection he cherishes for *Ruth Rumbalino*, is certainly the happiest invention of the play. In depicting this depressed buffoon, whose jokes are unappreciated by his public, and whose love is unrequited, but who is yet capable upon occasion of real magnanimity and self-sacrifice, the dramatist has exhibited a tender regard for life and nature which is otherwise imperceptible in his drama. *Daniel Dole* is admirably impersonated by Mr. E. W. Garden, a young actor who is thus for the first time brought prominently before the public.

LXIV.

“THE NEW MAGDALEN.”

[Olympic Theatre. —May 1873.]

MR WILKIE COLLINS has converted his story of “The New Magdalen” into a play. A prologue or introductory act furnishes the spectators with a key to the plot. The scene represents the interior of a cottage on the French and German frontier; the period is 1870, and a battle is supposed to be imminent. *Mercy Merrick* and *Grace Roseberry* meet and exchange confidences. *Grace* is of Canadian origin, and having buried her father in Rome, is now on her way to England to make herself known to a distant relative, *Lady Janet Roy*, and to claim her protection. *Mercy* is a nurse wearing the Genevan Cross, and in attendance upon the sick and wounded victims of the war; but, as she frankly reveals, her antecedents have been of a deplorable kind. She has sold matches in the streets; she has suffered imprisonment, presumably for theft; and she has been an inmate of a refuge for fallen women. She has since, however, endeavoured to redeem her character by obtaining

work as a domestic servant. In that capacity she has visited Canada, and is well acquainted with the district in which *Grace's* early life has been passed. But, the misery she has endured notwithstanding, *Mercy* is found to be possessed of great beauty, many accomplishments, and most refined manners. The audience duly enlightened in this respect, the German army is understood to advance, the rattle of musketry is heard, and a random bullet strikes *Grace* to the ground. A French surgeon pronounces life to be extinct. *Mercy* then resolves to appropriate *Grace's* papers and to personate her in England. In this way she hopes to secure a position in respectable society, which otherwise she feels to be quite hopeless of attainment. She departs armed with an order enabling her to pass unquestioned through the German lines. The privilege has been obtained for her at the instance of *Horace Holmcroft*, a young guardsman, acting as special correspondent to a London newspaper, who has been much impressed by the personal attractions of the adventuress. Before the prologue terminates, however, Mr. Collins, who is always disinclined to leave anything to the imagination of his public, introduces a German doctor to re-examine the body of *Grace*, to reverse the medical opinion of the Frenchman, and to declare that the young lady shall yet be restored to life. When the story is resumed, *Mercy*, in the character of *Grace Roseberry*, is shown to be thoroughly established in the house of *Lady Janet Roy* at Kensington. She is affectionately regarded by all, and is engaged to be married to *Horace Holmcroft*, who has proved to be her ladyship's nephew. The imposture has been thoroughly successful, although for a moment threatened with exposure when the *Rev. Julian Gray*, another of *Lady Janet's* nephews, enters upon the scene. *Mercy* discovers in *Mr. Gray* the chaplain of the reformatory in which she had once been sheltered ; but as the clergyman fails to recognise in her one of the members of his miserable congregation, she is relieved of her alarm on this account. Presently, however, the real *Miss Roseberry* appears, and thereupon the false *Miss Roseberry* falls senseless at her feet. Recovering, *Mercy* maintains the truth of her story, and *Grace* is denounced and ejected as a lunatic. She is without evidence in support

of her claim, although she could probably obtain, eventually, proof of her identity from her friends in Canada. The later scenes of the play, which certainly declines in interest after the rival claimants have been brought face to face, are mainly occupied with an exhibition of *Mercy's* waverings between good and evil. The clergyman's lectures, which are much influenced by a love he has suddenly conceived for her, bring her at last to penitence. She makes confession to him of her guilt, but still hesitates to reinstate the unfortunate *Grace* in her rightful position, and, strange to say, *Mr. Gray* connives at her delay in this respect. Sufficient justice is accomplished at last, however. The real *Grace* enjoys her own again; *Horace* very naturally declines to take to wife the adventuress he had believed to be *Miss Roseberry*; and *Mercy* resolves to return penitently to her old reformatory. From this fate she is saved by the infatuated clergyman, who makes her an offer of his hand. It is suggested that he will repair with her to some distant region where the antecedents of the lady will not be inconveniently inquired into, and where a reputable position in colonial society will be freely accorded to both. Under these circumstances *Mercy* has no difficulty in transferring her affections from *Horace Holmcroft* to *Julian Gray*. The force and ingenuity with which this story is set forth upon the stage are insufficient to mask its essential unwholesomeness and its tone of morbid sentimentalism, which entitle it to be fairly classed with dramatic writings of the school of Kotzebue. The author throughout appears as the uncompromising apologist and partisan of his heroine, and with a view to securing for her an undue share of sympathy he labours to present the poor woman who is the victim of her guilt in as odious a light as possible. *Grace* is supposed to be mean, sordid, and contemptible; she is denied her rival's advantages in the way of personal charms, manner, and even of dress. Still an excuse is scarcely thus afforded for filching from her the good name which undoubtedly belongs to her, for handing her over to the police as an impostor, or for locking her up in a lunatic asylum. In the same way, it is suggested that *Horace* acts ignobly when he warmly resents the fraudulent conduct of *Mercy* and withdraws from her his love. It is hard to see, indeed, that the guilt of

Mercy is entitled to anything like the measure of commiseration which Mr. Collins demands for it. If her early misdeeds are to be charged against society, she must be fully credited with her crime in personating *Miss Roseberry*. This is a voluntary effort of her own, undertaken after she had so far recovered her lost reputation that she had become a trusted nurse of the sick and wounded. The spectators were somewhat perplexed by the author's special pleading, but they certainly sympathised on the whole rather with the sufferings of *Grace* than with the sins of *Mercy*. The drama was well received, although its didactic tone and its diffuse dialogue were found to be oppressive, and attention languished much during its later scenes. The lengthy speeches of *Mr. Gray*, who is not a very probable clergyman, are better adapted for the pulpit than the stage, and might be abridged with advantage. The acting was somewhat unequal. The arduous character of *Mercy Merrick* is undertaken by Miss Cavendish, but is incompletely grasped by the actress, whose manner is throughout too deliberate and artificial. Mr. Archer appears as *Julian Gray*, and, until overcome by his own sermonising, acquits himself satisfactorily in the part. Mr. Peveril plays *Horace*, and *Lady Janet* is fairly represented by Mrs. St. Henry. *Grace Roseberry* is well portrayed by Miss Erntone. The scenic arrangements are of a liberal description, although some pains might be taken to render more impressive the warlike proceedings of the prologue.

LXV.

"MANFRED."

[Princess's Theatre.—August 1873.]

BYRON said of his "*Manfred*" that he had really and truly no notion whether it was good or bad, but that he had "at least rendered it quite impossible for the stage;" and further, that he had written the work "actually with a horror of the stage, and with a view to render the thought of it impracticable." When somewhat similar protests were

prefixed to "Sardanapalus" and "Marino Faliero," the poet's sincerity and consistency were called in question, for in those tragedies he had especially prided himself upon his regard for the "unities" and the established laws of dramatic composition. How, it was demanded, could he reconcile his "invincible repugnance" to the stage with his painstaking "to do penance within the unities," and, in such wise, to fit his plays for theatrical exhibition? "Manfred," however, is "a thing apart," possessing scarcely any of the attributes of a dramatic work. It could not possibly have been intended for the stage. It is without regular plot or action, or, indeed, characters. The scene is occupied throughout by the remorseful reveries and sufferings of *Manfred*, who stands the while substantially alone. No attempt is made to stir dramatic interest in his distresses, which are without variation from his introduction in the first scene to his death in the last. Writing to Mr. Murray from Venice in 1817, Byron describes "Manfred" as "a piece of phantasy," "a kind of poem in dialogue in three acts, but of a very wild, metaphysical, and inexplicable kind. Almost all the persons but two or three are spirits of the earth and air or the waters; the scene is in the Alps; the hero, a kind of magician who is tormented by a species of remorse, the cause of which is left unexplained. He wanders about invoking these spirits, which appear to him and are of no use; he at last goes to the very abode of the Evil Principle *in propria personâ* to evocate a ghost which appears, and gives him an ambiguous and disagreeable answer; and in the third act he is found by his attendants dying in a tower where he had studied his art. . . . The two first acts are the best; the third so-so; but I was blown with the first and second heats." It may be noted that this third act was rearranged, and for the most part rewritten, before the play was published.

With all its designed and accidental disabilities as an acting play, however, "Manfred" found its way to the stage. This was during Mr. Bunn's management of Covent Garden, and some ten years after the poet's death. Strange to say, the experiment of performing "Manfred" was attended with remarkable success. No doubt a large measure of the favour with which the work was received

may be ascribed less to the fame of its author, or to its fitness for performance, than to the musical embellishments supplied by the late Sir Henry Bishop, and to the beautiful scenery painted for the occasion by the Messrs. Grieve; but the players obtained a fair share of the applause. As the *Witch of the Alps*, Miss Ellen Tree won great distinction, and in the character of *Manfred* a young actor named Denvil acquired a popularity he failed to retain by his subsequent efforts in other plays. In 1863 "*Manfred*" was carefully reproduced by Mr. Chatterton at Drury Lane, when Mr. Phelps sustained the leading character, and the representation proved to be most attractive for many nights. And now Mr. James Guiver, who was lately Mr. Chatterton's treasurer, and who has undertaken the management of the Princess's Theatre, has commenced his season with yet another performance of "*Manfred*," and has secured the enthusiastic applause of a crowded audience, and, to all appearances, a very complete success.

In right of its having been thus thrice produced upon the stage, "*Manfred*" may now perhaps be classed as a "stock piece;" nevertheless, it is indisputable that the work suffers severely by transfer to the theatre, and its performance is in truth a cruel outrage upon the poet. Something of its power to move and impress the poem still retains, for this, indeed, it could under no circumstances altogether forfeit. Even *Manfred's* musings and apostrophes, although mercilessly condensed, do not wholly fail in their effect upon the audience. But the solemn beauty and mystery of the work vanish in the attempt to materialise the poet's imaginings. *Manfred* himself degenerates into a stage misanthrope, closely resembling the hero of "*The Stranger*," unexcited, however, by the presence of *Mrs. Haller*, while his magic arts acquire almost a ludicrous air. The *Destinies* and *Spirits* are not to be distinguished from the fairies of conventional extravaganza. Occasionally, indeed, the drama assumes the guise of a Christmas pantomime of a discouraged and low-spirited kind. The contrivances of the scene-painter and machinist, however ingeniously applied, do violence to the author's intentions by coarsening them into literalness and plain prose. These objections, however, apply to all representations of "*Manfred*," and

not specially to the performance at the Princess's. This, allowing for the limitations of the stage, is little inferior to the earlier exhibitions of the tragedy, and will probably command the approval of all devotees of spectacle and what may be called panoramic plays. Precedent has been closely followed. Bishop's songs and choruses, which, if somewhat uninspired, are yet harmonious enough, have been retained, and are rendered with fair effect. In the "Hall of Arimanes," Martin's picture of "Satan in Council," which was a famous and admired work forty years ago, has again been imitated, and Messrs. Telbin have furnished a series of Alpine views which are not far behind the productions of the Drury Lane and Covent Garden scene-painters. Moreover, the dances have been enriched by an interpolated ballet of female chamois hunters, lightly attired in silk stockings and chignons, and the first act is thus brought to a close after a fashion that greatly delights the majority of the spectators. Mr. Charles Dillon, who appears as *Manfred*, is probably as satisfactory a representative of the character as can now be found. The actor is rather mannered of gait and gesture, and delivers his soliloquies with ill-judged rapidity; throughout, indeed, his performance is deficient in intellectual qualities; but his vigour is undeniable, while in his appeal to the spectre of *Astarte* his display of genuine passion commands well-deserved applause. Mr. William Rignold efficiently impersonates the Chamois Hunter, and Miss Baldwin appears as the *Witch of the Alps*.

LXVI.

"THE BRIDAL."

[Standard Theatre.—September 1873.]

OF Beaumont and Fletcher's fifty plays, "The Maid's Tragedy" seems to be the only one that retains any hold upon the modern stage. Early in the century "Philaster," "Rule a Wife and Have a Wife," and even "Bonduca" were still occasionally represented; and in later years "A

King and no King" and "The Honest Man's Fortune" have been seen at Sadler's Wells during Mr. Phelps's exemplary rule of that establishment; while Mrs. Warner ventured upon the performance of the "Scornful Lady" and "The Double Marriage" at the Marylebone, and Mr. Anderson at Drury Lane revived "The Elder Brother." But these works, although they attracted attention as dramatic curiosities, did not permanently regain their old rank among acting plays, and after a season again quitted the theatre for the library. "The Maid's Tragedy" has been more fortunate; nevertheless, the play had been neglected for a century when Mr. Shiel, forty years ago, pointed out to Mr. Macready that it might with little difficulty be adapted for modern representation. Shiel had already been successful in revising and rearranging Massinger's "Fatal Dowry," and he undertook to fulfil like duties in regard to the "Maid's Tragedy;" but his political and official cares interfered with his design, and the task ultimately devolved upon Mr. Sheridan Knowles. Macready first played *Melantius* at Dublin in 1834, and three years later produced the amended tragedy at the Haymarket Theatre with remarkable success. Under its new name of "The Bridal" the work has been since frequently represented, and it is now attracting very crowded audiences at the Standard Theatre.

It was probably to meet the objections of the courtiers of the Restoration—who found that King Arcanes and his brother Lysippus inconveniently resembled Charles II. and the Duke of York, and who disapproved the teaching that "lustful kings" might be fitly punished by assassination—that the poet Waller supplied the "Maid's Tragedy" with a new last act, written in rhyme, which left all the characters alive and prosperous at the fall of the curtain. This attempt by most insipid means "to soften the rigour of the tragedy," as Waller expresses it, does not seem to have been presented on the stage. In 1661 Mr. Pepys found the play "too sad and melancholy," which he could not reasonably have done if Waller's alteration had been adopted; nor does he record any change in his opinion when he saw the work again represented in 1666, and the two following years. The *Melantius* of that period was

Mohun. The part subsequently became famous in the hands of Betterton. It was indeed owing to his anxiety to play *Melantius* on the occasion of his benefit in 1710 that the actor was induced to tamper with an attack of gout which terminated fatally a few days afterwards. *Melantius* was subsequently represented by Booth and by Quin, but the character having, curiously enough, escaped the attention of Garrick, Kemble, and Kean, it remained without a representative until it was undertaken and "created" anew by Macready.

Mr. Sheridan Knowles, well skilled in the production of sonorous blank verse, was a stanch admirer and imitator of the Elizabethan dramatists, and there was no danger of his venturing to patch the robust original with feeble rhymes or courtly prettinesses after the manner of Waller. But he was not free from the adapter's habitual failing, and he has added more matter of his own than there was any real occasion for, while his alterations of the text are not invariably judicious. He has strengthened the part of *Melantius*, with a view, no doubt, to its performance by Macready; but the character of *Aspatia* he has almost destroyed. It was advisable, perhaps, that the lives of both *Aspatia* and *Amintor* should be preserved; for modern spectators are indisposed towards that severe "butcher's bill" which usually attended the close of old tragedy; and in such wise the change in the title of the play became necessary, for *Aspatia* is its real heroine and her sorrows and sufferings its essential theme. The murder of the *King* is now satisfactorily accomplished behind the scenes, and there can be little objection to *Evadne's* death resulting from the bowl in preference to the dagger. But there is no necessity nor any sufficient provocation for the suicide of *Melantius*, while the purposeless omissions in the powerful scene in the second act, when *Evadne* should inform her husband of the wrongs he has received at the hands of the *King*, are without excuse. As the play stands, the proceedings of *Amintor* become wholly unaccountable. In other respects Mr. Knowles has fairly preserved the spirit of the original, and restored to the stage a work replete with passion and poetry, cleared of all offence, and most impressive in representation; while of his interpolated scenes it

may be said that the interview between *Melantius* and the *King* in the fourth act, and the attempt to murder *Melantius* in prison in the fifth, are striking examples of his ingenuity and force as a dramatist.

It has been held that to the illusions of poetic tragedy large theatres are almost indispensable, in order that the forcible drawing and broad colouring appropriate to the exhibition of scenes and sentiments removed somewhat from ordinary experience should not be too closely inspected by the audience. "I cannot act tragedy within half a yard of the people in the boxes," wrote Mrs. Fanny Kemble in her *American Journal*. The vast proportions of the Standard Theatre amply meet every requirement of this nature; and at the Standard, too, an audience is found thoroughly sympathetic with dramatic representations of an elevated class. "The Bridal" has been received with great enthusiasm, and unusual applause rewards the exertions of the chief performers. For the part of *Melantius* Mr. Creswick has been engaged, an experienced actor, well studied in Macready's traditions and method of representation, and endowed with untiring energy. Mr. Creswick is ably supported by Mrs. Charles Viner, who, in the arduous character of *Evadne*, depicts vehement emotion with a skill that is now rare upon the stage. As *Amintor* Mr. Charles Creswick displays zeal and painstaking, but the responsibilities of the part weigh somewhat too heavily upon a young actor who has much of his art yet to acquire, and who needs especially to remedy a faulty and monotonous system of elocution. Mr. Hamilton plays the *King* with abundant force, if with inadequate dignity; and Miss Neville is a satisfactory *Aspatia*. The tragedy has been furnished with new scenery and decorations, which may not be always strictly appropriate, but are yet of a handsome and liberal sort.

LXVII.

"ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA."

[Drury Lane Theatre.—September 1873.]

FOR a century after the re-opening of the theatres at the Restoration, the honours of scenic representation were denied to Shakspeare's "*Antony and Cleopatra*," pronounced by Coleridge to be "by far the most wonderful" of his historical plays, and even "a formidable rival of '*Macbeth*,' '*Lear*,' '*Hamlet*,' and '*Othello*.'" Its place upon the stage was meanwhile occupied by Sir Charles Sedley's rhyming tragedy of "*Cleopatra*," and by Dryden's "*All for Love*." Sedley's play disappeared after a few performances, but "*All for Love*," first produced at the Theatre Royal in 1678, continued to enjoy public favour, and to be ranked among "stock pieces," until a comparatively recent date. Dryden said of it that "it was the only play he wrote for himself; the rest were given to the people;" and it was long esteemed his dramatic masterpiece, owing something of its design and treatment to Shakspeare undoubtedly, yet with just claims to be accounted an original and independent work. It was not until 1759 that the "*Antony and Cleopatra*" of Shakspeare was restored to the stage by Garrick. The poet's text underwent abridgment and transposition at the hands of Capell the commentator, and new scenery and decorations were liberally provided for the occasion. The result disappointed expectation, although Garrick himself played *Antony* to the *Cleopatra* of Mrs. Yates, and after six representations the tragedy was withdrawn. It did not reappear until 1813, and then only in an "adapted" form, with interpolated borrowings from Dryden, the preparation of this compound version being ascribed to John Kemble. Young appeared as *Antony* and Mrs. Faucit as *Cleopatra*, Mrs. Siddons having declined to undertake the part, for the strange reason "that she should hate herself if she were to play it as she thought it should be played." Macready represented *Antony* at Drury Lane in 1833, but in a version

of the tragedy that still contained many passages by Dryden. The original text does not seem to have been again reverted to until 1849, when Mr. Phelps revived "*Antony and Cleopatra*" at Sadler's Wells Theatre with the care and good taste which invariably distinguished his system of management. Indeed, it is difficult to overvalue the actor's labours in the cause of the poetic drama when it is remembered that, with the exception of "*Titus Andronicus*," "*Troilus and Cressida*," and the three parts of "*Henry the Sixth*," he included in his repertory the whole of Shakspeare's plays. The representation was most successful, especial applause being won by Miss Glyn in the part of *Cleopatra*. In later years the tragedy has been occasionally reproduced for the actress during her fulfilment of brief engagements at the Princess's and Standard Theatres; otherwise to the majority of modern playgoers it has remained an unknown work.

In reviving "*Antony and Cleopatra*" at the opening of Drury Lane Theatre for its winter season, the manager has avowedly been moved less by reverence for Shakspeare than by a sense of the attractiveness of spectacle and of the opportunities afforded by the play in that regard. Mr. Chatterton expresses a conviction, founded upon his seven years' experience as a manager, "that a play to be acceptable to all classes in a large theatre must appeal to the eye and the senses as well as to the understanding; that the action must be accompanied by spectacle, and the play itself must be adapted to the dramatic fashion of the time in which we live." Accordingly, "*Antony and Cleopatra*" has been operated upon by Mr. Halliday to suit the purposes of the stage decorator. The work has been reduced to about one-half of its original length, and is now performed in four acts. Pantomimic scenes have been introduced, realising the famous description of *Cleopatra's* progress in her burnished barge upon the *Cydnus*—the river being transferred, for the convenience of the adapter, from *Cilicia* to *Egypt*—and introducing a Roman festival with processions of Amazons, ballets, and songs of boys in honour of the nuptials of *Antony* and *Octavia*. Further, the battle of *Actium*, with the defeat of *Cæsar* by the combined fleets of *Antony* and *Cleopatra*, is depicted with surprising animation and completeness. Indeed, nothing

could be better in their way than these exhibitions of scenic art and stage management. Mr. Beverly's paintings are in his best manner, the costumes and accessories are most splendid, while crowds of supernumeraries fill the scene and enhance the effect of the picture. A more magnificent spectacle can hardly have been produced in a theatre than is contained in this revival of Shakspeare upon what may be called "Babil and Bijou" principles. Upon the other hand, it must be said that the integrity of the work has suffered. No line is spoken that is not Shakspeare's, but then the lines of Shakspeare that are not spoken are very many indeed. The transposition of the scenes, so as to preserve "unity of place" as much as possible, has been skilfully managed, and is without doubt a reasonable alteration; for, as Johnson says of the play, "its events are produced without any art of connection or care of disposition." But Mr. Halliday's excisions are certainly inordinate. *Pompey*, with his friends *Menas*, *Menecrates*, and *Varrius*, has altogether disappeared; the rival camps of *Cæsar* and *Antony* are not presented; and no reference is made to the second defeat of *Antony*; the treachery of *Enobarbus* is but briefly treated, and his death is omitted; while the scene between *Cæsar* and *Cleopatra* in the last act finds no place in the new version of the play. These are among the more important omissions; but generally there has been much paring away of poetry to make room for pageantry. However, it seems the tragedy was to be presented upon these terms or not at all. The spectators readily accepted Mr. Chatterton's conditions, and "*Antony and Cleopatra*," ruthlessly docked but gorgeously adorned, was welcomed with extraordinary applause.

In "spectacular" plays the actors of necessity occupy a rather subordinate position. Their services cannot be wholly dispensed with; still they are felt to be but the stopgaps of the representation, the aids and vehicles of the scene-painter and the costumier. Mr. Anderson is a somewhat torpid *Antony*, with intervals of vociferation, and altogether fails to display the exaltation of poetic temperament of the character. An actress competent to appear as *Cleopatra* could hardly perhaps be found in the present condition of the stage. The part is assumed at Drury Lane by Miss Wallis,

a young lady who appeared with success at the Queen's Theatre last season. Miss Wallis must be credited with intelligence and zeal, but she fails to convey a due idea of the *Cleopatra* of Shakspeare. The characters of *Cæsar* and *Enobarbus* are fairly sustained by Mr. Sinclair and Mr. Ryder.

LXVIII.

"RICHELIEU."

[Lyceum Theatre.—October 1873.]

THE play of "Richelieu," which has now undergone revival at the Lyceum, first came upon the stage in 1839, when Macready was manager of Covent Garden, when theatres were few, and, as a consequence perhaps, dramatic companies were strong. It was Lord Lytton's third essay as a dramatist, "The Lady of Lyons" having been produced with great success in the previous season, two years after the comparative failure of "The Duchesse de la Vallière," which had been withdrawn after a few representations. "My first poetry was thought detestable, and my first play very narrowly escaped being damned," the author confessed long afterwards in a speech made at Edinburgh. From this disaster, however, he derived valuable lessons, and soon became an adept in the playwright's craft, even to something like unscrupulousness in the means he occasionally employed to secure theatrical effect and to entrap applause. "Richelieu" has enjoyed less popularity than "The Lady of Lyons," for it is unprovided with such sympathetic characters as *Claude Melnotte* and *Pauline Deschappelles*, and its main theme offers no special points of interest. *De Mauprat* and *Julie* are but conventional lovers, whose fortunes occupy only an episode of the fable; the characters could only have won commiseration so long as they were personated by players of distinction. That the conspiracy of *Baradas* and his friends must prove abortive is a foregone conclusion; and certainly the plot is of very weak constitution, while the measures taken to frustrate it are

almost ludicrously inapt. The Cardinal simulates death, and, although the conspirators gather round his couch, they are not sufficiently courageous or curious to satisfy themselves that their foe has really expired. The play, however, is by no means lacking in stir and incident; of small complications there is even a bewildering superabundance, so that the attention of the audience is kept constantly on the alert, while of skilful dialogue and of high-sounding rhetoric there is a most liberal supply. Something the dramatist avowedly owed to the "*Cinq Mars*" of De Vigny, and something more to an earlier romance by the author of "*Picciola*;" acknowledgment was also due to Sir Walter Scott for a scene borrowed from "*Quentin Durward*." The character of *Richelieu*, however, to which the play owes the vitality it enjoys, is of Lord Lytton's own compounding. De Vigny, presenting *Cinq Mars* as his hero, was compelled to regard the *Cardinal* as the conventional villain of the story, and to paint him in very dark colours indeed; but it was the dramatist's object to commend *Richelieu* to the favour of the audience, and at the same time to contrive a part well suited to the display of Macready's singular abilities as an actor. Historical accuracy had to make concessions to stage effect, and the *Richelieu* of the play has thus become a curious amalgam of lofty patriotism and low cunning; he is alternately a grim jester and an enthusiast of most exalted aims; now calm and sarcastic as *Iago*, and anon furious and impassioned as *Lear*. *Richelieu* long remained one of Macready's most esteemed impersonations, and upon his retirement the character was inherited by his legitimate successor, Mr. Phelps, who was careful to follow the elder actor's method of performance—which, indeed, could not be improved upon—and who has in such wise frequently obtained well-merited applause.

At the Lyceum "*Richelieu*" has been equipped for performance after the most liberal fashion. The play has never before enjoyed such splendour or completeness of decoration. The costumes are notably rich and tasteful; the characters wear the aspect of animated Vandycks. But in other respects the representation leaves much to be desired. In the present condition of the stage so strong a cast as the play possessed upon its first production could

hardly be arranged. Miss Helen Faucit was the original *Julie* to the *De Mauprat* of Mr. Anderson, thirty years ago a perfect representative of the youthful heroes of romance; Mr. Phelps undertook the subordinate part of *Joseph the Capuchin*; Mr. Warde appeared as *Baradas*, and Mr. Elton as the *King*. Mr. Macready, indeed, was careful to group round him the most efficient performers obtainable, and took extreme pains to secure the adequate interpretation of every part in the play. The Lyceum company numbers few actors of any note, and occasionally the drama suffered gravely from the incompetence of its exponents. The characters of *Julie* and *De Mauprat* were even so inefficiently filled as to provoke the displeasure of an audience that seemed otherwise disposed to regard the performance with excessive leniency, and to lavish applause at every possible opportunity. Mr. Irving appears as *Richelieu*, the actor's recent successes on the stage justifying, perhaps, his ambition to distinguish himself in so important a character. Mr. Irving plays with care and intelligence, his physical gifts, with the assistance of appropriate costume, enabling him to present a striking resemblance to the well-known portraits of the Cardinal. His performance on the whole, however, is deficient in sustained force and fails to impress. *Richelieu* has to be depicted as prematurely old and decrepit, and yet must be represented by an actor of untiring energy and inordinate strength of voice. He is charged with the delivery now of mordant jests, and now of protracted rhapsodies. Mr. Irving's system of elocution is somewhat monotonous, and his longer speeches appear to tax him severely, their effect upon the audience being oppressive; while his sarcastic utterances lose point from his too deliberate manner and his lack of a penetrating and resonant quality of voice. Upon the humorous side of the character he lays little stress, and neglects the many opportunities of this kind provided by the dramatist for the enlivenment of the audience. In the hands of Macready, *Richelieu* during the earlier scenes of the play was almost a comic part, and thus contrast and variety were secured as the story advanced. Mr. Irving is spiritless enough for three acts, but he permits himself a grand burst of passion at the close of the fourth,

Here, indeed, his vehemence has something more of deliriousness about it than the situation really demands, involving a total loss of the cardinal's dignity; but the actor's genuine ardour evoked storms of applause. His most successful effort was in the last scene, which was in many respects very finely rendered. Mr. Irving will no doubt improve upon his performance with a view to investing it with increase of harmony and coherence; at present it is somewhat disappointing to his admirers. The *King* is well played by Mr. Clayton, who attributes to the ailing *Louis*, however, a robustness of aspect he was far from possessing. The actor's appearance is most picturesque, and he declaims his speeches with excellent effect. Of the other performers little can be said in the way of commendation. The play has been condensed at some sacrifice of its intelligibility.

LXIX.

"ARKWRIGHT'S WIFE."

[Globe Theatre.—October 1873.]

CERTAIN events in the life of Sir Richard Arkwright were dealt with by Mr. Saunders in his novel of "A Lion in the Path," and by Miss Katherine Saunders in the collection of her stories bearing the title of "A Crust of Bread." To these works, no doubt, the new play by Mr. Tom Taylor and Mr. John Saunders stands indebted for some of its ingredients. It is a thoroughly complete and coherent production, however, wearing nothing of that clumsy and unwieldy air which usually disfigures the dramatised novel. The story of Arkwright's life readily lends itself to the purposes of fiction, not merely because of its romantic and adventurous character, but also in that it contains unexplained passages concerning which the ingenuity of the novelist or the playwright can be freely exercised. It has always been matter of question as to how far Arkwright's improvements in spinning were due to earlier inventors whose discoveries he had plagiarised; while much obscurity

has rested over the circumstances of his separation from his second wife, Margaret Biggins, of Pennington. The authors have constituted this Margaret Biggins the heroine of their play, bestowing upon her the more euphonious surname of *Hayes*. Of Patience Holt, the wife whom Arkwright married in early life, all mention is suppressed, in deference, perhaps, to the prevalent opinion which holds a widower to be far less eligible than a bachelor for the position of a hero of romance. The scene of the first act of the drama is laid at Leigh in the year 1767. *Arkwright*, a man of middle age at this time, is supposed to be plying his original trade as an itinerant barber, vending dyes and pomatums and purchasing hair for the wigmakers. "Nevertheless," as Carlyle writes of him, "in stropping of razors, in shaving of dirty beards, and the contradictions and confusions attendant thereon, the man had notions in that rough head of his! Spindles, shuttles, wheels, and contrivances plying ideally within the same; rather hopeless-looking, which, however, he did at last bring to bear. Not without difficulty." He has entered the cottage of *Margaret Hayes* that he may become the purchaser of her last possession—her profuse auburn tresses. *Margaret* is the daughter of one *Peter Hayes*, an old weaver, reduced to penury by confused study of mechanics and alchemy of a humble kind. He has vague dreams of discovering the philosopher's stone, and has meantime advanced towards an improvement in spinning machinery. But want has overtaken him, and the bailiffs have seized his furniture and even the fragmentary models of his inchoate invention. *Arkwright* pities the father and falls in love with the daughter; somewhat, too, his sense of curiosity and acquisitiveness is stirred by hearing of the old man's studies and discoveries. He satisfies the demands of the bailiffs, and in lieu of purchasing *Margaret's* hair becomes possessor of it by making her his wife. A year elapses, and *Arkwright* is found living at Bolton with *Margaret* and her father in hopeful circumstances. He has in secret appropriated and perfected the inventions of *Peter Hayes*; but the mystery with which he has carried on his operations has roused the jealousy of *Margaret*. To appease her, he reveals the nature of his labours, and triumphantly exhibits his new and complete

spinning-machine. The disclosure is attended with disastrous consequences. It has been overheard by *Peter Hayes*, whose anger knows no bounds at what he conceives to be the theft of his invention. The machine-breakers are abroad. Wrought upon by her father, who with revengeful objects persuades her that the ruin which followed his own efforts as a discoverer will surely fall upon Arkwright, influenced also by the popular belief that machinery deprives the poor of bread, *Margaret* anticipates the impending visit of the machine-breakers, and with an axe hews in pieces her husband's model. He returns to find the wreck and ruin of his cherished invention, and in a powerful scene reproaches the unhappy woman for her unworthy conduct, and casts her off for ever. When the story is resumed, many years are supposed to have elapsed. It is now 1786; *Arkwright* has become *Sir Richard*. He was, in truth, knighted because he chanced to be one of the many provincial celebrities who carried congratulatory addresses to George III. after Margaret Nicholson's attempt upon his life. It is convenient for the dramatists, however, to forget that he was one of "Peg Nicholson's knights," as they were popularly known, and to attribute his distinction to his success as an inventor and a mill-owner. Of his wife and her father he has seen nothing since they parted at Bolton more than twenty years since. *Margaret* and *Peter* reappear almost as mendicants, broken with age, poverty, and suffering. They arrive at *Arkwright's* house and mill at Birkacre, near Chorley, in the midst of general rejoicing at his prosperity. *Margaret* is now enabled to make atonement for her errors. A mob of machine-breakers is about to attack *Sir Richard's* property. She frustrates their design by giving timely warning to the dragoons; and, ultimately obtaining the forgiveness of her husband, the play is brought to a happy conclusion.

It is a defect in the drama that *Arkwright* should appear throughout as rather a self-seeking person—almost dishonest, indeed, in his dealings with *Peter Hayes*—and that *Margaret's* violence has not sufficient justification to retain for her the entire sympathies of the audience. But this allowed for, the work is entitled to warm commendation. A drama more artistic in design, and more impressive in performance,

has not for some time been contributed to the stage. It is admirably written, the characters are original and well-defined, and the situations are ingeniously contrived, while they attend naturally upon the development of the story. "Arkwright's Wife" is fully entitled to enduring success. The representation lacked fervour somewhat, and the more emotional scenes would certainly bear rendering with increase of force. The performers, however, displayed marked care and intelligence. Mr. Emery is most efficient in the part of *Peter Hayes*, although the actor assumes an aspect of senility too early in the story, considering the many years that elapse between its commencement and its close. Mr. Kelly is a natural and spirited *Arkwright*, and Miss Barry, if deficient occasionally in passion and intensity, exhibits considerable command of pathetic expression in the part of Margaret. The subordinate characters of *Nancy Hyde*, a Lancashire lass, and her lover, *Hilkiah Lawson*, a lawyer's clerk, are well sustained by Miss Daly and Mr. Garden.

LXX.

"THE HONEYMOON."

[Royalty Theatre.—October 1873.]

WHEN Tobin's comedy of "The Honeymoon" was first produced at Drury Lane Theatre in January 1805, a prologue by Sir Humphrey Davy informed the audience that the dramatist no longer existed to "deprecate their censure or enjoy their praise." His death had occurred in the previous December on shipboard in Cork Harbour, just as he was setting sail for the West Indies in the hope that a sea-voyage might benefit his failing health. He had been for many years labouring to attain dramatic success, "The Honeymoon" being the last of some dozen plays he had from time to time submitted to the managers only to meet with disappointment. During his life but one of his works saw the footlights—a farce called "All's Fair in Love," played once only, on the occasion of Munden's benefit in 1803.

He had become so habituated to misfortune that he had fully prepared himself for the rejection of "The Honeymoon," and had even planned the insertion of certain of its scenes in a comedy he left incomplete, founded upon the Spanish play of "La Gitanilla de Madrid" by Don Antonio de Solis. When intelligence reached him that the production of "The Honeymoon" had been decided upon, he was too ill to furnish the prologue and epilogue, then held to be indispensable adjuncts of theatrical exhibitions; the task devolved upon his intimate friend, Sir Humphrey Davy. The success of the comedy was most signal; it secured an enduring position in the dramatic repertory. Inquiry was then made as to the other works of the dramatist, and gradually "The Curfew," "The School for Authors," "Yours or Mine," "The Fisherman," "The Guardians," and some other plays, found their way to the stage. They were for the most part favourably received, without enjoying, or perhaps deserving, very frequent representation, and have since slumbered undisturbed upon the shelf.

"The Honeymoon" was avowedly written in imitation of the Elizabethan dramatists, with whose writings Tobin had made himself well acquainted. He had even at one time contemplated the publication of a new edition of Shakspeare, to be well supplied with original notes and illustrations, and had with this view collected a library of old books and miscellaneous materials. He aimed at the revival of poetic comedy of the school of Beaumont and Fletcher, thus anticipating by a quarter of a century the efforts of Mr. Sheridan Knowles in the same direction. His subject and its treatment were to be suited to modern taste and purged of all offence; but otherwise he purposed a faithful adherence to the prescriptions of old-fashioned comedy. There was to be truthful exhibition of character, with poetry, wit, and a certain harmony in the design and the sentiments; but accurate regard for manners and customs or for geographical limitations was not to be attempted. The *dramatis personæ* were in truth to be English people in picturesque costumes, assuming Spanish or Italian names, and inhabiting an imaginary country; their proceedings were to be after a fashion that permitted

the utmost latitude to the poet's invention. Early in the century the scheme had all the merits and attractions of novelty, although in its carrying out something like compilation was involved. Tobin's play reproduces and rearranges many well-established scenes and characters, and, in defiance of all rules concerning unity of action, is occupied with three distinct subjects. A professed woman-hater is ridiculed and converted; a lively coquette trifles with the affections of her lover; and a husband subdues the angry temper of a termagant wife. The *Duke Aranza* and *Juliana* are plainly derived from the "Taming of the Shrew," with some assistance from "Rule a Wife and have a Wife." *Zamora* is a transcript of *Viola* in "Twelfth Night," while other portions of the play are traceable to "The Inconstant" of Farquhar, "The Antiquary" of Shakerley Marmion, and "The Rival Friends" of Hausted. In point of construction, "The Honeymoon" displays little skill, the incidents hanging loosely together and the scenes following each other irregularly enough; yet the comedy is thoroughly effective in representation. The characters afford good opportunities to the actors, and the dialogue and speeches are throughout admirable. Tobin's blank verse is remarkable for its fluency and elegance, while it is by no means deficient in force upon occasion. Indeed it is in the poetry and grace of its diction that the merit of the play now chiefly consists.

"The Honeymoon," revived at the Royalty Theatre, has undergone compression, and is played in three acts, by which change the work has suffered some loss of symmetry. The country dance of all the characters is omitted, probably because the orchestra at the Royalty is now relegated to mysterious regions beneath the stage, and is only permitted to discourse music of a muffled sort. Yet the dance was once a prized feature in representations of "The Honeymoon." In it lay Edmund Kean's only success, as critics held, when he unwisely ventured upon the part of the *Duke Aranza*. He did not shine in comedy, but his grace and agility as a dancer were indisputable; he had played harlequin and jumped through windows. The vivacity of Elliston or the gallant bearing of Charles Kemble must not be looked for in modern *Aranzas*. Mr. Warde is deficient

in animation and in humour, and he plays the *Duke* without any sense of enjoying the part; he is skilled in elocution, however, and delivers his speeches ably and intelligently. Miss Hodson appears as *Juliana*, succeeding less in the more vehement moods of the character than in the subsequent penitence and submission to the *Duke*. A hint of pathos in the scene of reconciliation was conveyed with very genuine art. *Jacques*, the mock Duke, has always been a highly esteemed character in the hands of popular low comedians, and tradition has sanctioned the introduction of much exuberant drollery. Mr. J. Clarke is well versed in the conventionalities of farce, and supplies much original humour of his own; his *Jacques* wins great laughter and applause from the audience. Mr. Wyndham is a spirited *Rolando*, and *Zamora* is personated with graceful ingenuousness by Miss Augusta Wilton. The lovers *Montalban* and *Volante* are only tolerably represented; but *Volante's* scenes of coquetry are perhaps the most faded portion of the comedy. Archness and volatility have somehow forfeited their power to charm upon the stage; their artificiality has become oppressively apparent, or the art of investing them with histrionic effect is not known to our modern players.

LXXI.

"THE ROAD TO RUIN."

[Vaudeville Theatre.—November 1873.]

"THE Road to Ruin" retains a measure of the great popularity it acquired on its first production at Covent Garden in 1792. It is the only one of Holcroft's thirty plays that has preserved any vitality; for even the once famous melodramas of "Deaf and Dumb" and "The Tale of Mystery" have long since vanished from the theatre; while of his many farces and operas nothing remains but a catalogue of titles in the "Biographia Dramatica." With "The Road to Ruin," however, many modern playgoers can boast acquaintance; the work has been frequently

presented within the last twenty years or so. Mr. Phelps and Mr. Chippendale have won applause in the part of *Old Dornton*, and *Goldfinch* has been successfully interpreted by Mr. Charles Mathews and Mr. Walter Lacy. The life of the comedy has indeed been prolonged probably quite as much by the favour with which it has been regarded by the theatrical profession as by the approval it has obtained from audiences. Plays rich in the traditions of histrionic triumph have always been much cherished by the players, who like to view success as theirs by inheritance, and to appear in parts that have commanded applause in the hands of their predecessors. The literary merits of "The Road to Ruin" are not remarkable; it makes no pretension to wit or polish of diction, nor is there much dramatic art manifested in its construction. It is less a comedy than a domestic drama, dealing with homely scenes and sentiments, and well supplied with bustling incidents. The story is intricate without being especially interesting; it is rendered tolerably clear to the audience, however, and certain of its events are readily available for humorous and pathetic expression. With the exception of *Goldfinch*, the characters could scarcely have been new to the stage even at the date of the first production of the comedy. *Mr. Silky* and *Mr. Sulky*, upon the confusion of whose names the plot chiefly depends, are familiar figures of artificial creation; *Old Dornton*, the worthy banker, *Henry*, his profligate but high-minded son, *Mrs. Warren*, the elderly coquette, and *Sophia*, her hoydenish daughter, have all done duty in many previous works. *Goldfinch*, however, as a caricature of an amateur stage-coach driver, was a decided novelty, greatly enjoyed by the audiences of 1792. "Handling the ribbons" was then a favourite occupation with gentlemen of stable tastes; the fashion, which in our own time has undergone revival of a subdued sort, endured for many years. Captain Gronow has placed upon record the names of many of his contemporaries who indulged in this pursuit, one of them even going so far as to have his front teeth filed to enable him to expectorate "in the true fashion of the most knowing stage-coach drivers." It was to the character of *Goldfinch*, as Hazlitt relates, and to the method of its interpretation by Lewis, the comedian, that the popularity of

"The Road to Ruin" was mainly due. "Nine persons out of ten who went to see the play went for the sake of seeing *Goldfinch*, though the best scenes are those in which he has no concern." He is not intrusted with a line of wit, or even of sense, his language consists of a few cant phrases constantly repeated; but he is required to be incessantly animated, voluble, and busy. His "That's your sort!" occurs some fifty times, and Holcroft has been credited with the invention of that mechanical form of humour which consists in the iteration of an expression not in itself particularly entertaining. Laughter is provoked simply by the recurrence of the phrase, which thus becomes invested with the effect of wit. "It was a compendious receipt for being witty," writes Hazlitt, "to go and see *Goldfinch* and repeat after him 'That's your sort!'" It was a very transferable, and therefore a very convenient, commodity. If the invention was not favourable to the increase, it was at least calculated for the spread of wit." This sort of dramatic humour, whether or not originated by Holcroft, has certainly been turned to account by many subsequent writers.

"The Road to Ruin" no doubt exhibits symptoms of decay, not being possessed of the intrinsic merits which bid defiance to the assaults of time. Still in representation the comedy furnishes very genuine amusement. Nothing better could be desired than the *Old Dornton* of Mr. W. Farren, who plays with artistic intelligence and finish, closely following his father's manner of personating the character; Mr. Horace Wigan is a most efficient *Sulky*, and Mr. Warner displays unexpected force in the part of *Harry Dornton*. The actor may be congratulated upon his complete success, for his task is one of difficulty. Much art has to be exercised in commending young Dornton's alternations of profligacy and penitence, sobriety and intoxication, to the favourable consideration of the audience, while the scene in which he suddenly transfers his protests of affection from Sophia to her mother is most hazardous in representation. As *Goldfinch* Mr. David James is perhaps insufficiently mercurial, yet he plays with a genuine good-humour that is not to be denied, and he thoroughly deserves the prolonged applause which he obtains. The

part has now lost relevancy even as a caricature, and can scarcely be made comprehensible to modern spectators, with whom *Goldfinch* is simply an eccentric figure, to be viewed as an old drawing by Gilray or Bunbury, funny after a fashion, but remote from present experiences of life and manners. It is creditable to Mr. James that he is able to overcome these difficulties; by his drollery and sustained efforts he succeeds in providing thorough entertainment. The remaining characters are only tolerably supported. There seems to be a difficulty in obtaining adequate representation of the elderly coquettes and romps of old-fashioned comedy.

LXXII.

"GRISELDA."

[Princess's Theatre.—November 1873.]

BOCCACCIO is supposed to have founded the famous story of "Patient Grisell" upon real or traditional events. It was translated into Latin by Petrarch in 1373, from whom it was borrowed by Chaucer and assigned to the Clerk of Oxenforde in the "Canterbury Tales." It has from time to time served the purposes, indeed, of the poets and novelists of all nations, and has frequently been adapted to the uses of the theatre. Dunlop finds it hard to account for the popularity of the story, which is certainly surpassed in interest by many of its contemporary themes; but it was probably much prized by generations of husbands and fathers as a kind of text-book in which wives and daughters might study the virtues of gentleness and patience. The example of *Grisell*, however, hardly deserved to be unconditionally imitated, for the merits of resignation must depend in some measure upon its motive, and passive submission to wanton tyranny may claim reasonable limitations. *Gautier*, the husband of the original story, is afflicted with a childish curiosity to learn the extent of his lady's endurance and constancy; his persistent cruelty has but this object; and she is supposed to be sufficiently

rewarded for her long years of unexampled suffering by the sudden cessation of her trials, and by permission to live on as a wife and a marchioness without further molestation. It was soon perceived, however, that in transferring the story to the stage some additional motive must be supplied to invest the husband's conduct with credibility. In "The Pleasant Comedy of Patient Grisell," written by Chettle, Dekker, and Haughton, and first printed in 1603, the Marquis of Saluzzo is depicted as stirred to cruelty not less by caprice than by the complaints of his nobles at his marriage with a peasant girl, and at the probability of their being ruled in the future by her offspring. In this way a greater degree of plausibility is certainly imparted to his cruelty. In another treatment of the subject the husband's experiment is not a mere test of his wife's obedience, but is designed also to punish her in that she had at first slighted his suit and rejected the offer of his hand. Miss Braddon has endeavoured by various means to fortify this weak point in the fable of "*Griselda*." *Gualtiero*, the Marquis of Saluzzo, is provided with a cousin, *Cosmo*, a villain of the *Iago* pattern, who, believing that the accident of his birth has deprived him of the rank and wealth that were properly his due, determines to avenge himself by a system of general maleficence. He contrives to prejudice the Marquis against his wife, and when *Gualtiero* is compelled to leave home to fight against the Moors in Barbary, *Cosmo* assumes the government of Saluzzo, and is enabled to persecute *Griselda* to his heart's content. He even, although this seems to have been an after-thought on the part of the dramatist, professes a sudden passion for his cousin's wife, and distresses her by the persistency of his shameful addresses. Other excuses for the folly and the sin of *Gualtiero*, who is assuredly one of the weakest and meanest of creatures, are found in the fact that his peasant wife has been most extravagant in the matter of dress and jewellery, and has been quite prodigal in her charitable donations. Unfortunately these apologies for *Gualtiero* are very injurious to the character of *Griselda*, and seriously affect the integrity of the old story. It has been judged, perhaps, that the portrayal of meek submission under all circumstances did not furnish many histrionic

opportunities, and *Griselda* is therefore induced to forfeit her fame for patience at an early period of the drama. She presently becomes most impatient indeed, paces the stage furiously, indulges in many impassioned tirades, one of which, denouncing the Pope for an alleged intention to dissolve her marriage with the Marquis, is rather too palpable a bid for the Protestant applause of a modern gallery ; and subsequently she goes fairly mad, singing fragments of songs after the established method of theatrical insanity. She is restored to reason in the time-honoured way by being carried back to the cottage of her infancy and attired again in her peasant's clothes. *Gualtiero* returns from Barbary to reinstate his Marchioness, having obtained her pardon for his misdeeds, and to discomfit the machinations of *Cosmo*.

In right of its poetic pretensions, and the evident anxiety of its author to impart some literary worth to a modern play, the work is entitled to respectful consideration ; but in representation its many deficiencies become glaringly apparent. There is great lack of incident and movement, and the fable is set forth with inferior skill. "*Griselda*" is in four acts, and possibly was originally designed to be in five, for there is a huddled air about the closing scenes, as though compression had been obtained at the cost of intelligibility, and much explanatory matter had been sacrificed in reducing the play to reasonable dimensions. For instance, of *Griselda's* child, elaborately abducted at the end of the fourth act, no further information is afforded, and *Cosmo's* schemes in this respect are left at last in an undeveloped and enigmatic state. The drama, however, is already of very ample length, for if the characters do little, they talk much. "*Griselda*" is written in blank verse, and contains many forcible lines, although rhythm is too often secured by resorting to diffuseness, and sometimes modern colloquialisms are introduced with prosaic effect—as when the *Marquis* confesses that he is "not great at figures." It is to be added that the play was listened to most attentively and received with great applause. An enduring success may not have been obtained, but Miss Braddon may well be encouraged to venture further as a dramatist. Relying more upon her own invention and observation and less

influenced by stage precedents and conventionalisms, she may produce far more satisfactory and impressive dramas than "*Griselda*." The work has been provided with scenic appointments and decorations of a most liberal and tasteful kind. Mr. Rignold appears as *Gualtiero*. Mr. Rousby personates the villain *Cosmo* with close regard for the manner and even the mannerisms of the late Charles Kean; while as *Griselda* Mrs. Rousby fully exhibits those smiling graces and sentimental airs upon which her surprising popularity as an actress seems to be chiefly if not altogether founded.

LXXIII.

"THE SCHOOL FOR INTRIGUE."

[Olympic Theatre.—December 1873.]

"THE School for Intrigue" is an adaptation by Mr. J. Mortimer of Beaumarchais's "*La Folle Journée; ou, Le Mariage de Figaro*"—a work now chiefly known in England in association with the music of Mozart. An early version of the comedy, however, was represented at Covent Garden Theatre in 1784, some few weeks after the first performance of the original in Paris. Holcroft, the author of the "*Road to Ruin*," informed of the great success achieved by Beaumarchais, had hurried to France to obtain a copy of the play. His efforts were fruitless, owing to the jealous care taken by the managers of the French theatre to prevent the issue of copies. But by attending the representation of the comedy for some ten nights in succession, he was enabled to commit enough of the work to memory for the object he had in view. As "*The Follies of a Day*," the adaptation thus curiously contrived was received with great favour, and, when subsequently reduced to three acts and presented as an after-piece, held its place for many years among stock plays. On the first night of its performance Holcroft himself appeared as *Figaro* in the absence of Mr. Bonner, the actor to whom the part had been allotted. The one song introduced was composed by

Shield, and became very popular. Mozart's "Nozze di Figaro" was first produced six years later at Vienna, when it was received with hisses. The audience even condemned "Non piu andrai," a fact which the composer has ingeniously recorded in the supper scene of "Don Giovanni." That time has completely reversed the verdict of the Viennese, and avenged the insult Mozart received at their hands, scarcely needs to be said.

It was upon the invitation of his friend and patron, the Prince de Conti, that Beaumarchais wrote "Le Mariage de Figaro" as a sequel to "Le Barbier de Seville." He afterwards persuaded himself that he had from the first designed the two comedies merely as preludes to his repulsive play of "La Mère Coupable," in which he has laboured to destroy all the humour and pleasantness of his earlier productions. But he clearly mistook afterthought for premeditation. Though he vaunts "la profonde et touchante moralité" of his last play, it is thoroughly vicious and corrupt, to say nothing of its exceeding dulness. Yet "La Mère Coupable" enjoyed prodigious success, attributable in a great measure no doubt to the reintroduction, even under the most gloomy and depressive conditions, of a character so dear to the audience as *Figaro*. He has, indeed, been to the French stage almost what *Falstaff* has been to our own—a welcome and delightful figure, let him appear when he might. Even while Beaumarchais lived another playwright had ventured, with the public consent, to credit *Figaro* with further adventures, and to bring him anew upon the scene. In 1794 M. Richard Marteleay produced at the Théâtre Français his five-act comedy of "Les Deux Figaros," which Mr. Planché adapted to the English stage in 1836, when Liston played *Figaro* to the *Cherubino* of Mr. Charles Mathews, the characters being supposed to be sixteen years older than they were at the period assigned to "La Folle Journée."

The success enjoyed by Beaumarchais's comedy upon its first production was then without precedent, except in the case of "Timocrate," a feeble tragedy by Thomas Corneille, which has long since vanished from the theatre. "Le Mariage de Figaro" was played for one hundred nights in succession. Much of its popularity was certainly due, how-

ever, to its political allusions and its freedom of speech upon general topics, while public curiosity concerning it had been stimulated by the fact that for four years the authorities had withheld the play from representation. It satirised existing institutions in a manner that had hitherto been unknown upon the French stage. Mr. Carlyle, who otherwise judges severely its "thin wire-drawn intrigues, thin wire-drawn sentiments and sarcasms," says of it that "it spoke what all were feeling and longing to speak." The comedy's significance in this respect has now, of course, departed or remains but as a matter of minor historical interest; it lives at present on the strength of its wit, its animation, and dramatic ingenuity. *Figaro* may be held to be a character borrowed from the Spanish theatre, or, as some imagine, a portrait of Beaumarchais limned by himself; in any case, the proceedings of the barber and the story of his marriage with Suzanne afford very genuine entertainment. The first three acts of the work have been fairly classed by a French critic as legitimately pertaining to "la bonne comédie d'intrigue," and the two last "au genre de la lanterne magique." The English version of the comedy now produced at the Olympic has been executed with considerable care. Regard for modern taste has necessitated many omissions which need not be regretted; for the transposition of certain of the scenes there is less obvious warrant. The trial of *Figaro* for his breach of promise to marry *Marceline*, who is afterwards proved to be his mother, is an unpleasant episode that could well have been dispensed with; time would then have permitted the retention of the amusing scene of the marriage festivities and the appearance of *Cherubino en fille*. These incidents have been suppressed by the adapter, although the preliminary scene in which *Suzanne* places the cap on *Cherubino's* head is duly represented. Unfortunately, at the Olympic the part of the page, who is supposed to be only thirteen years old, has been assigned to an actor in opposition to the special instructions of Beaumarchais. "Ce rôle," he writes, "ne peut être joué, comme il l'a été, que par une jeune et très-jolie femme; nous n'avons point à nos théâtres de très-jeune homme assez formé pour en bien sentir les

finesses.” Mr. Fisher plays the part with skill and propriety, but he necessarily fails to convey an adequate idea of the *Cherubino* of Beaumarchais. Mr. Righton appears as *Figaro*, Mr. Neville personates *Almaviva*. A sufficiency of zeal is manifested by these performers, but their efforts otherwise scarcely warrant much comment of a favourable kind. The characters of *Suzanne* and the *Comtesse* are sustained by Miss Fowler and Miss Edith Gray.

LXXIV.

“WILD OATS.”

[Royalty Theatre.—December 1873.]

O’KEEFFE’S comedy of “Wild Oats ; or, The Strolling Gentleman,” has been revived, in deference, apparently, to the growing regard of the public for dramatic entertainments of an old-fashioned class. “Wild Oats” was first produced at Covent Garden in 1791 with a success which was of long duration. Even of late years the work has been now and then presented. Mr. Phelps for some few nights won applause as *Rover* at Sadler’s Wells during his management of that establishment, and but a little while ago “Wild Oats” was played on the occasion of a benefit at the Haymarket Theatre. It is by this comedy, and perhaps also by his opera of “The Castle of Andalusia,” that O’Keeffe is now mainly remembered. His fame has no doubt suffered on account of his fertility. He wrote in all some seventy plays, the great majority being hastily contrived to serve some temporary purpose of the managers, and disappearing very shortly after their first performance. But the world is inclined to appraise an author by taking account of all his compositions and averaging their merits. When Walter Scott made one of his characters boast acquaintance with the dramatic repertory “from Shakspeare to O’Keeffe,” he most unwittingly wounded the old playwright, then afflicted with blindness and sorely pinched by poverty. “I understand : from the top of the ladder to

the bottom. He might have placed me a few steps higher," said poor O'Keeffe with a sigh. He died in 1833, the later years of his life having been cheered by a pension from the privy purse.

O'Keeffe had been an actor, and his plays fully disclose his intimate acquaintance with stage artifices of all kinds. He was bent upon amusing his audience and obtaining their applause at any cost. With this view he pressed much extravagance, sham sentiment, and patriotic clap-trap into his service; of one of his productions he complained that it was neither condemned, laughed at, nor cried over. "I would have," he wrote, "a play of mine either applauded to the roar, or nobly hissed off at once and die game; no flat wine—sweet or vinegar let it be." Still he was humorous and inventive, he possessed a keen eye for character, could write very lively dialogue, and was able to provide the actors of his time with most effective occupation. In performance "*Wild Oats*" is still found to afford much entertainment. It is as wildly improbable as a modern Palais Royal play, with something of the high spirits and jovial humour of a comedy by Farquhar, and a measure even of Farquhar's wit. The choleric old admiral, *Sir George Thunder*, and his faithful boat-swain-valet, *John Dory*, seem borrowed from the pages of Smollett; *Sim* is the simple countryman with a Yorkshire dialect, of whom the stage possesses so many examples; and *Ephraim Smooth* is but a Quaker *Mawworm*. *Lady Amaranth*, however, the fair Quakeress, is an original and graceful heroine; while *Rover*, the strolling player, is one of those agile and energetic characters which prove quite irresistible when adequately interpreted. The first *Rover* was Lewis, and the part was afterwards assumed with great success by Elliston. The stroller's utterances chiefly consist of scraps of plays which were probably familiar to the audiences of 1791, but have now become almost obsolete. Indeed, the story of "*Wild Oats*" arises from *Rover's* frequent cry of "I am the bold Thunder!" a quotation from the "Rehearsal" of the Duke of Buckingham, which modern playgoers can hardly be expected to recognise. *Rover* is forthwith mistaken by *John Dory* for the son of *Sir George Thunder*, and is borne to the house of the admiral's

wealthy niece, *Lady Amaranth*. The stroller's sense of the humour of the mistake leads him to personate *Harry Thunder*, unaware that the young man, under the name of *Dick Buskin*, is already known to him and a member of the same itinerant company. For *Sir George's* son has adopted a course of conduct more likely in O'Keeffe's time than now, and escaped from his father's house to turn strolling player. When *Sir George* presents himself at the house of *Lady Amaranth*, *Rover* is by no means disconcerted, for he is induced to believe that, like himself, the admiral is only a disguised actor playing a part, and wearing a disguise for his own advantage. Meantime *Rover* has possessed himself of the affections of *Lady Amaranth*, and so revolutionised the Quakeress's household that a performance of "As You Like It" is contemplated in the back drawing-room, with her ladyship in the part of *Rosalind*. The imbroglia reaches at last a condition of uproarious bewilderment. A duel is about to take place between the actor and the admiral, when *Rover* saves the life of his adversary, who has been attacked by a gang of murderous footpads. Then comes the discovery that the stroller is in truth the elder son of *Sir George*, who has been guilty of bigamy, although no one appears to think much the worse of him on that score. *Harry Thunder* is proved to be illegitimate, but he is consoled by the reflection that he has found a half-brother in his comrade *Rover*. He is further comforted by an assignment in his favour of *Rover's* claims upon the property of his father *Sir George*; for *Rover*, having secured the hand and fortune of *Lady Amaranth*, can well afford to be generous. Other scenes in the play are occupied with the humours of *Sim* the countryman, the avarice of *Gammon*, a farmer, the sufferings of *Sir George's* neglected wife *Amelia*, and the misfortunes of one *Banks*, a clergyman, who is eventually useful in proving the validity of the admiral's marriage and the parentage of *Rover*. At the Royalty "Wild Oats" is played in three acts instead of five, and certain of these passages have undergone judicious retrenchment. The comedy was well worth revival, and was received with very genuine applause. Its humorous excesses were forgotten in its ceaseless bustle and drollery, and it was represented with spirit and com-

pleteness by the Royalty company. Nothing could be better than the *Lady Amaranth* of Miss Hodson, whose costume presents an artistic study of the dainty tints affected by the Society of Friends; Mr. Stephens is a sufficiently irascible *Sir George*; Mr. J. Clarke appears as *John Dory*; and Mr. Bannister does full justice to the hypocrisy of *Ephraim Smooth*. As *Rover* Mr. Wyndham displays animation and some humour, but his elocutionary method is rather monotonous, and he is unable to give point and effect to the many quotations he is required to deliver. Moreover, he should not represent an Englishman of the last century, and an actor to boot, as wearing a moustache. Mr. Cathcart is an efficient *Sim*, once a famous character in the hands of Blanchard and "little Knight;" the importance of *Sim*, however, has been much diminished in the present version of the comedy.

LXXV.

"PHILIP."

[Lyceum Theatre.—February 1874.]

BALZAC in one of his minor stories relates how a jealous husband, upon his wife's denial that her lover is secreted in a closet, has the door by which only escape is possible bricked up, and so leaves the hidden gentleman to perish. This incident, which has rather a mediæval flavour about it, and may not have been of Balzac's own inventing, found its way to the stage some twenty years ago in a drama which Mr. Morris Barnett adapted from the French, and presented at the Princess's Theatre during the management of Mr. Charles Kean. The English version of the play was called "The Married Unmarried;" Mr. Ryder personated the vindictive husband, and Miss Heath the suspected wife; the period was the Consulate of Napoleon, and the actual process of immuring the unfortunate lover was fully exhibited to the audience. Eventually, however, he was permitted to emerge from his prison by the destruction of

its outer wall, and even to wed the lady for whose sake he had suffered so much, her first marriage having been conveniently dissolved, probably on account of incompatibility of temper, by the order of the First Consul, or it may have been the Pope. To this story, dealt with by Balzac and by the author of "The Married Unmarried," Mr. Hamilton Aidé's new play of "Philip" stands indebted for its origin. Mr. Aidé, however, has supplied so much additional matter and so treated the subject that his drama must by no means be considered as deficient in inventiveness or novelty. The "bricking-up" incident is reserved for the last of four acts, and though very elaborately prepared for, is somewhat abruptly despatched when the time arrives for its presentment; and it does not in truth prove especially effective in performance. The scene of the first or introductory act is laid in Andalusia, and the events of the fable are supposed to be of modern occurrence. *Philip* and *Juan* are half-brothers, the sons of the old *Countess de Miraflore*. *Philip* is described as "a rough Esau;" *Juan* as "a smooth-tongued Jacob." Both wear handsome Spanish costumes, and both are much in love with *Marie*, a young French girl, whom their mother has removed from a convent to be her companion and attendant. *Philip's* love is of a worthy kind, but *Juan's* designs upon *Marie* appear to be not wholly honourable. The Countess, however, informed by *Juan* that *Philip* proposes to make *Marie* his wife, indignantly dismisses the girl from her service. After *Marie's* departure the brothers quarrel furiously. *Juan* attempts to stab *Philip*, and *Philip* succeeds in shooting *Juan*. Believing himself guilty of murder, *Philip* then hastens to escape from Spain, and the first act concludes. The story is not resumed until eight years are supposed to have elapsed. *Marie* is now found to be the companion of *Mdme. de Privoisin*, a Parisian lady of fashion. *Philip* reappears as the *Comte de St. Léon*. He has been long absent in America, has speculated successfully, and become possessed of a large fortune and of the gloomy Château de St. Léon, in Brittany. The only object of this second act, which introduces many superfluous characters and abounds in purposeless dialogue, appears to be the reunion of *Philip* and *Marie*. He renews his protestations of affec-

tion, and she consents to become his wife. Of the murder she is unaware, and, in the interest, it may be presumed, of the plot of the play, she refrains from asking indiscreet questions concerning the fate of her old lover, *Juan*. In the next act *Philip* and *Marie*, as a newly married couple, are occupants of the Château de St. Léon. The husband is disturbed, not merely by remorse on account of his crime committed more than eight years since, but he is also jealous of a certain *Count de Flamarens*, who had expressed great admiration for *Marie* during her sojourn in Paris, and who is understood to be still troubling her with his addresses. Presently a mysterious stranger arrives, and soon discloses his acquaintance with the murderous episode in the early life of *Philip*. The stranger is of course *Juan* in disguise, intent upon revenge. He has discovered somehow *Philip's* change of name, and his union with *Marie*. He is bent upon punishing the assassin and upon relieving him of his wife. We are then brought to the last scene, and to the "bricking-up" incident. In *Philip's* absence *Juan* has visited *Marie* by night, abandoning his disguise and repeating the avowal of his passion for her, the fact that she is his brother's wife notwithstanding. Upon the sudden return of the husband *Juan* is hidden in *Marie's* oratory. *Philip*, believing that it is his wife's lover, the *Count de Flamarens*, who is in concealment, orders certain masons, who conveniently happen to be on the premises, to wall up the oratory door. After an angry scene *Juan* discloses himself. In his joy at finding that he is no longer chargeable with murder, *Philip* is content to forget his brother's shameful conduct towards *Marie*. *Juan* departs relinquishing his vengeful schemes; the husband and wife are reconciled; and the play concludes after a tolerably comfortable fashion.

In the romantic drama probability or even intelligibility is not much to be considered, provided always there is a sufficient supply of theatrical surprise and effect. In "Philip," although the curtain fell to enthusiastic applause, the interest excited is never strong, while the earlier scenes were found to be oppressive, from a certain sluggishness of action and an over-abundance of futile conversation. Moreover, the characters move sympathy but slightly: *Philip* is

throughout monotonously gloomy, *Juan* is a very worthless person, while *Marie* is so obscurely portrayed that there is even some doubt at last whether she has really awarded her preference to her husband or to his brother. The writing is pleasant and unpretentious enough, although there are occasional lapses into inelegance, to say the least of it, as, for instance, when the *Count de Flamarens* inquires of *Mdme. de Privoisin* concerning "her little game." The success of the play upon its first representation could not be questioned, however.

Mr. Irving's performance of the hero presents many artistic qualities, marred, however, by excess of effort and elaboration and too manifest a consciousness of the presence of the audience. The part is purely of a melodramatic kind, requiring simple force and breadth of treatment rather than any special histrionic subtlety, for which indeed it offers few opportunities. Mr. Irving's exertions were rewarded, as indeed they deserved to be, with frequent applause. Mr. Clayton is an efficient representative of *Juan*, Miss Isabel Bateman appears as *Marie*, and Miss Virginia Francis invests with sufficient importance the subordinate character of *Mdme. de Privoisin*. The scenery and stage appointments are very complete, and Mr. Aidé has exemplified his versatility by enriching his play with a tuneful boating-song, which obtains a most favourable reception.

[LXXVI.]

"THE WHITE PILGRIM."

[Court Theatre.—February 1874.]

THE events of the story of the new poetic drama "The White Pilgrim" are supposed to occur in Norway at a period comprehensively described as the "early Christian era." *Harold*, the hero, is a young pagan knight, who, like the *Robert* of Meyerbeer's opera, is alternately subjected to the influences for good or for evil of his two chief companions. On the one hand, he is urged by *Sigurd*, a hunch-

back, to plunge into vice and profligacy of all kinds ; on the other hand, he finds a good genius in *Thordisa*, a Christian maiden whom he loves, and by whom he is loved. To win favour from *Thordisa*, *Harold* has even sheltered a band of Christian worshippers in a ruined chapel under the shadow of his castle walls, and has thereby incurred the furious reproaches of *Sigurd*, who would rather persecute the followers of the new faith with fire and sword. The absence of *Thordisa* upon a distant pilgrimage gives *Sigurd* for a time absolute rule over the weak and vacillating *Harold*. The young man in a fit of drunkenness is induced to renew a vow, first made by *Earl Olaf*, his remote ancestor, that he will with his own hand put to death the first Norman who shall cross his threshold—a month being allowed for the accomplishment of the murder. For this incident of the oath the drama is avowedly indebted to the story of “*Sintram*,” by De La Motte Fouquet ; but “*The White Pilgrim*” is in every other respect to be viewed as an original work. Now the legend relates that as *Earl Olaf* swore his fearful oath, Death, in the guise of “a sad and white-robed figure,” stood beside him and registered his vow. So when *Harold* repeats the form of the oath, the spectral White Pilgrim reappears and witnesses that procedure. *Harold* has encouraged himself to take the vow by the reflection that “no Norman foot has ever trod our coast for years.” But no sooner has the ceremony been completed than the warder’s horn is sounded, and *Sir Hugo*, a knight of Normandy, accompanied by his wife, the *Lady Isabelle*, enters the castle claiming its hospitality. Under the conditions of his oath *Harold* is bound to slay his guest within one month or to forfeit his own life. Tortured by doubt and remorse, he defers the fulfilment of his pledge to the last moment, and meanwhile beguiles himself with an unaccountable passion for the *Lady Isabelle*. Upon the last day of the month *Thordisa* returns from her pilgrimage to find her *Harold* false. He has even determined upon silencing the Christians in the ruined chapel, whose prayers and praises disturb his love-making, and appears bent upon very reckless courses indeed. Upon the intercession of *Thordisa*, however, *Harold* eventually breaks his oath, and consents to the safe departure of the Norman, offering his

life as the penalty of his sins to *Sir Hugo*. The Norman knight declines the office of executioner, and absolves *Harold* of all blame. But *Harold*, exhausted by the mental emotions he has undergone, swoons and dies in the arms of *Thordisa*, who survives him but a few minutes. The hunchback *Sigurd* withdraws angrily denouncing the degeneracy of his period, and as the curtain descends the spectral *White Pilgrim* appears for the last time, hovering over the corpses of *Harold* and *Thordisa*.

The literary merits of "The White Pilgrim" are remarkable. The play is written in vigorous, resonant blank verse, but rarely marred by an infirm or unmusical line, and containing many stirring and fervid passages, fairly leavened with poetry of a worthy kind, if not perhaps of the very first quality; and much dramatic skill has been exhibited in dealing with the subject for the purposes of the stage and rendering it intelligible to the spectators. Unity of place even has been strictly regarded, and throughout the play the scene representing the exterior of *Harold's* castle remains unchanged. Still the reception of "The White Pilgrim" was not wholly favourable, and occasionally, indeed, the audience gave free expression to their dissatisfaction. This arose in part, no doubt, from the many defects in the performance; but the subject of the play must be held accountable for a measure of the discontent that was manifested. All the author's adroitness has not enabled him to veil the fact that his story is far better adapted for a narrative poem than for a stage play. "The White Pilgrim" lacks the kind of interest that is effective in a theatre; the characters fail to excite the sympathy of a general audience. *Harold's* oath, the main incident in the fable, is really but the result of a drunken frolic; he binds himself so fatally for the schoolboy reason that he has been "dared" to that act by *Sigurd* the hunchback, who resembles *Mephistopheles* in his advocacy of evil, and *Silenus* in his habits of intemperance. The Norman knight, who by mere accident seems likely to fall a victim to *Harold's* folly, does not awaken much concern, while the *Lady Isabelle* is altogether unnecessary to the story; her love passages with her host being at once vague and insipid. But the greatest misfortune of the work is the necessity for

introducing upon the scene the figure of Death in the aspect of the White Pilgrim. There appears to have been no help for it but to revert to that conventional ghost which was thought to be securely laid when old-fashioned melodrama of the "Castle Spectre" school was finally shelved. The apparition enters through a hole cut in a scene representing a distant view, and delivers a long address, which completely failed to impress the audience. It is desirable that in future performances the occupation of the spectre should be reduced as much as possible, and that some improved arrangements should be adopted for its entrance upon the stage.

Mr. George Rignold is the impersonator of *Harold*. The actor is throughout animated and energetic, even to excess. He is quite unskilled in the art of delivering blank verse, and reduces all his speeches to a kind of grotesque and uncomfortable prose. Mr. Hermann Vezin appears as *Sigurd*, and spares no exertions to give effect to a part which does not lie conveniently within his means as an actor. The rather colourless character of *Thordisa* is undertaken by Miss Moodie. Mr. Bruce as *Rolf*, *Harold's* foster-brother, has the merit of reciting distinctly the legend of *Earl Olaf's* oath, which forms the basis of the drama. Mr. Hann has supplied the one scene of the drama—the exterior of *Harold's* castle, with the rockbound coast of Norway in the distance.

LXXVII.

"MARY QUEEN O' SCOTS."

[Princess's Theatre.—February 1874]

MR. W. G. WILLS has written a new historical play bearing the lengthy title of "Mary Queen o' Scots; or, The Catholic Queen and the Protestant Reformer." Queen Mary has hitherto appeared upon our stage in the French and Italian versions of Schiller's tragedy, presented during the brief visits to this country of Rachel and Ristori; in theatrical

adaptations of "The Abbot" of Sir Walter Scott; and in Banks's turgid old play of "The Island Queens; or, The Death of Mary Queen of Scots," which the famous Mrs. Oldfield first made popular, but which has now remained many years neglected. Mr. Wills, however, stands in no wise indebted to any of these earlier productions, but has founded his play upon events which have for the most part escaped the manipulation of other dramatists, although Mr. Swinburne's "Chastelard," which is less perhaps to be viewed as a play than as a poem, deals with some portion of the theme of "Mary Queen o' Scots." Mr. Wills has limited himself to the more youthful years of the Queen's life. Upon the opening of the play she is found to be the widow of the French King, and on the point of quitting France for Scotland. Darnley is not introduced upon the scene, nor is his name once mentioned, and when the curtain descends Mary is left unprovided with a second husband. She is thus younger by some twenty years than the heroine of Schiller's tragedy, which exhibits the final imprisonment of the unfortunate Queen at Fotheringay, and her execution for her alleged complicity in Babington's treason. It is obvious that the more dramatic passages in Mary's history are not comprised in the period chosen by Mr. Wills for illustration upon the stage; and it must be added that he has made but unskilful use of the materials he has preferred to operate upon. "Mary Queen o' Scots" suffers from its lack of incident and from an irksome sameness that pervades the whole play. The dramatist may be entitled to plead the historical nature of his subject in answer to the demand for a coherent story; but the absence of animation, interest, and effectiveness is not to be satisfactorily accounted for in this way. And Mr. Wills's views of history are certainly eccentric. In his tragedy of "Charles the First" he laboured to make *Cromwell* contemptible; in "Mary Queen o' Scots" he has aimed at presenting *John Knox* in a ludicrous light. The "Protestant Reformer" appears as a comic character, speaking a broad Scottish dialect, such as is usually assumed by actors personating *Sir Pertinax McSycophant* or *Bailie Nicol Jarvie*. A peculiarity of this kind is hardly to be justified in a drama of poetic pretensions—otherwise *Macbeth* him-

self might be represented as afflicted with a North British accent. Further, *John Knox* is supposed to be, if not absolutely the lover of *Queen Mary*, still so inflamed an admirer of her beauty, that he likens himself to St. Anthony yielding to temptation when, upon her solicitation, he interferes to protect her favourite, *Chastelard*, from the vengeful fury of a Protestant mob. The first meeting of *Knox* and *Mary* occurs in the second act, when, mounted on a white horse, she is about to enter Edinburgh; he denounces her as a Papist, and endeavours to incite the citizens to close the town gates against her. The play, indeed, consists mainly of long conversations, more or less polemical in tone, between the *Queen* and the *Reformer*, with occasional reference to the story of *Chastelard*. *Rizzio* is introduced as the *Queen's* secretary, hardly yet aspiring to be her lover; and *Lord James Murray*, the *Queen's* brother, from time to time occupies the stage. *Chastelard's* love for *Mary* is set forth at some length, although it completely fails to prove interesting in representation, while the condemnation and execution of the lover move sympathy in a very slight degree. By the time, however, that this, the catastrophe of the play, had been arrived at, the audience were in too exhausted a condition possibly to indulge in any expression of emotion; for in truth Mr. Wills's new drama is a very wearisome production, and its defects in this respect were greatly aggravated by the inferiority of the actors concerned in the representation. But even histrionic art of the highest class could scarcely have secured favour for "*Mary Queen o' Scots*." Mr. Wills, although his blank verse is crude and inharmonious, writes with vigour, is gifted with a considerable measure of poetic fancy, and has a decided view of the characters he designs to place upon the stage; but he is deficient in constructive skill as a dramatist, and he is regardless both of the predilections and of the powers of endurance of his audience. "*Mary Queen o' Scots*" is not so much a drama as a collection of speeches which have the misfortune to be delivered very indifferently. Much has been done by the management, however, to give to the play the attractiveness of a pageant. New and handsome scenery has been painted representing the "old garden and plea-

saunce" at Fontainebleau, a view of Edinburgh during the triumphant entry of the *Queen*, and various interiors of Holyrood Palace. The costumes are appropriate and costly, and numerous supernumeraries fill the stage as soldiers and citizens, and form the mob that forcibly intrudes into the Royal Chapel demanding the death of *Chastelard* and the destruction of "the idols of Baal." As a spectacle, the play, no doubt, may claim applause.

The chief characters are sustained by Mr. and Mrs. Rousby, for whom they were probably devised. The lady is a most picturesque representative of the young *Queen*, and assumes a variety of superb costumes; but her acting shows no departure from that complacent feebleness which has usually attended her histrionic efforts. The part is, of course, far less taxing to its representative than is Schiller's heroine; still it appears susceptible of a more effective rendering than the limited nature of Mrs. Rousby's art enables her to award to it. Mr. Rousby's curious impersonation of *John Knox* afforded entertainment to the gallery, at any rate. Mr. Rousby is not apparently practised in the imitation of Scottish peculiarities of speech, and may be excused, therefore, for his occasional recourse to the dialects of Yorkshire and other counties, and even for his lapsing now and then into the nasal and guttural intonation of Fagin the Jew. It is not, however, wholly the actor's fault that *John Knox* appears so divested of dignity as to be even rather an unseemly figure in the story. Mr. Harcourt failed to please in the part of *Chastelard* or to excite commiseration for the untimely end of the infatuated lover. *Rizzio* and *Lord James Murray* are subordinate characters which Mr. Darley and Mr. Fenton were unable to invest with much vitality.

LXXVIII.

"LADY CLANCARTY."

[Olympic Theatre.—March 1874.]

IN the last volume of his "History of England," Lord Macaulay pointed out that the early marriage and misfortunes of the Jacobite Earl of Clancarty might furnish a good subject to a novelist or a dramatist. Mr. Tom Taylor has availed himself of this suggestion, and contrived a play which may not perhaps claim to possess any very remarkable merit, but which is yet found to be sufficiently effective in representation. *Lord Clancarty* when a boy of fifteen was married to a bride of eleven, *Lady Elizabeth Spencer*, the daughter of the Earl of Sunderland. After the ceremony the youthful husband and wife were parted, and, as Macaulay relates, many years, full of strange events, elapsed before they met again. The Earl had turned Roman Catholic, and, following the fortunes of James the Second, had been compelled to surrender to Marlborough at Cork; his estates had been confiscated, and after enduring three years' imprisonment in the Tower, he had escaped to the Continent, and been graciously received by the Court at St. Germain. The Treaty of Ryswick having destroyed all hope that the banished dynasty would be restored by foreign arms, *Clancarty* sought to make peace with the English Government. He stole across the Channel and obtained an interview with the young wife from whom he had so long been parted. He found her fondly devoted to his interests, but from her father, Sunderland, and his son, *Lord Charles Spencer*, it was clear the proscribed and ruined Jacobite could expect no mercy. He was torn from his wife's arms and conveyed again to the Tower. In vain did *Lady Clancarty* follow him and implore permission to share his cell. He was saved from death upon the scaffold only by the intervention of the famous Lady Russell, who took the unhappy young wife with her to Whitehall and obtained from *William* the pardon of *Clan-*

carty. His estates were forfeited—they had indeed already been bestowed upon Lord Woodstock, the eldest son of the Duke of Portland—but a small pension was granted to him, and, accompanied by his faithful *Elizabeth*, he retired to Altona, in compliance with the condition of his pardon, that he should quit the kingdom and never return to it. Of his subsequent fate there seems to be no record.

Mr. Taylor has dealt with these materials after a rather prosaic fashion, introducing many incidents that have seen much service in earlier melodramas, and thus imparting a commonplace air to his play. *Lord Clancarty's* story is in truth more pathetic and impressive in the pages of Macaulay than in the theatrical guise it has been constrained to assume upon the stage of the Olympic. The dramatist at once sacrifices much of the romance and interest of his theme by allowing it to be supposed that *Clancarty* is unable to recognise his wife in the young lady he has accidentally met and rescued in the old conventional way from the attack of a party of smugglers, and with whom he subsequently finds himself to be in love. In this way his reunion with his wife is treated more as the result of accident than of design. In order to fortify the story for dramatic purposes, and to find some excuse perhaps for its division into four inordinately long acts, Mr. Taylor has implicated *Clancarty* in the Assassination Plot of 1696, with which he had really no concern. Lady Russell is not introduced upon the scene, no doubt because her just claims to the regard of the audience might interfere with the sympathy due to *Lady Clancarty*. There is quite a sufficiency of historical personages, however, with frequent and most wearisome references to the political events and opinions of the period. If "*Lady Clancarty*" were less historical, it would be so much the more dramatic, and might in such wise count upon a more enduring success than it will probably achieve. But Mr. Taylor has covered the work with so heavy and opaque a coating of what is called "local colour," that occasionally form and outline and meaning become completely lost to sight. The interest is by no means strong, but it would prove adequate for a drama of reasonable dimensions if it were less subjected to interruption and suspension. The play,

however, may no doubt be somewhat improved by revision and the removal of much dull and superfluous dialogue. The characters have at present a way of lecturing each other at most inconvenient opportunities, regardless of the oppressive effect of their proceedings upon the audience. But, allowing for the author's prosiness and prolixity, the earlier scenes develop the story clearly enough, and often exhibit considerable ingenuity of contrivance. The last act, however, is very weak, and should be reduced forthwith to one brief scene explanatory of the pardon of *Clancarty*. The fate of the traitor *Cardell Goodman* excites little interest, and might safely be withdrawn from the stage. Moreover, it is probable that *Goodman*, who, all his crimes notwithstanding, had been a member of the University of Cambridge, an actor of some distinction, and the favoured lover of the Duchess of Cleveland, was far less ruffianly in aspect and manner than he is represented to be in "*Lady Clancarty*." An underplot relating to the loves and jealousies of *Lord Woodstock* and *Lady Betty Noel* is certainly trite and tedious enough; but it is perhaps too closely interwoven with the main story to be wholly suppressed.

Mr. Henry Neville is an animated representative of *Lord Clancarty*, and obtains much applause by his unflagging exertions. *Lady Clancarty* is personated by Miss Cavendish with intelligence and some power, if with excess of artifice and elaboration and too manifest a straining after effect. Mr. Vernon plays creditably as the acrimonious and merciless Whig, *Lord Charles Spencer*; and Mr. Charles Neville supplies an artistic and sympathetic sketch of *William the Third*.

LXXIX.

"READY-MONEY MORTIBOY."

[Court Theatre.—March 1874.]

THE story of "*Ready-Money Mortiboy*," which has been converted by its authors, Messrs. Walter Besant and James Rice, into a drama, is so far to be distinguished from the

fables usually occupying the stage, that it deals more in grim humour and a sort of jocose cynicism than in matters of romance and sentiment, and dispenses with the aid of a hero and a heroine, as such personages are generally constituted, in favour of a group of most unworthy characters. *Ready-Money Mortiboy*, as readers of the story will remember, is a banker, usurer, and miser, who has discarded his only son, *Dick Mortiboy*, on account of a forgery committed by the young man when a clerk in his father's office. After a long lapse of years, *Dick*, who has been absent in America and the colonies, returns and obtains his father's forgiveness, not because there is any penitence on the one side or parental affection on the other, but for quite other reasons. *Old Mortiboy* pardons the prodigal, believing him to have returned home the possessor of a large fortune; but *Dick* is in truth as penniless as when he was expelled from his father's roof; his wealth is a mere pretence the better to enable him to plunder his parent. *Dick's* scheme promises to be successful in the first instance; it seems probable that *Ready-Money Mortiboy* will fall an easy prey to his son's machinations. The miser, however, is found to be more reluctant to part with his money than had been anticipated, and *Dick* thereupon consents that his villanous friend and partner, one *Alcide Lafleur*, a half-caste from the island of Mauritius, shall administer laudanum to the old man and afterwards rifle his cash-box. This crime is rendered unnecessary by the voluntary proceeding of the miser, who, satisfied that he has but a little while longer to live, and very anxious to save his estate from diminution on account of legacy or probate duty, executes a deed of gift, under virtue of which his whole property becomes vested in his son *Dick*. After a lapse of some months, in the course of which old *Mr. Mortiboy* is supposed to have departed this life, *Dick* is exhibited as a banker and landed proprietor of great wealth, bent upon philanthropic undertakings for the benefit of his country, and much in love with his cousin, *Miss Grace Heathcote*. *Dick's* suit is hopeless, however, for the young lady has bestowed her affections upon her kinsman, *Frank Melliship*, who has been ruined by the malpractices of the elder *Mortiboy*, and, moreover, *Dick* is already provided with a wife in the person of *Polly Tresler*,

his father's housemaid, who is by no means disposed to relinquish her claims upon her husband. Even when it is made apparent that *Polly* in marrying *Dick* has committed bigamy—for she had previously bestowed her hand upon a mariner who still survives—*Dick's* case is little bettered, for *Miss Heathcote's* preference for *Frank Melliship* is not to be shaken. *Dick* then generously provides for his rival, enabling him to marry *Grace* by admitting him to a share in the banking business of the house of *Mortiboy*; and when presently *Dick* is shot in a fierce brawl with his old partner, *Alcide Lafleur*, the play concludes suddenly with a suggestion that he has met the punishment due for his many misdeeds.

It will be seen that no attempt is made to stir sympathy except in regard to the thoroughness of the leading characters. These are most forcibly presented, limned in very striking colours, and no mistake is for a moment possible concerning them. *Dick* is from first to last a very consummate scoundrel, though it is to be said for him that he is never contemptible. Indeed, his lack of heart, conscience, and moral principle seems to be a natural defect in his constitution, for which he is hardly to be held accountable. And he even secures a measure of respect from the audience by reason of his supreme audacity, his physical gifts of strength and activity, and a certain animal fidelity which induces him in dying to conceal the name of his assassin, his old Californian partner and fellow-criminal. For *Old Mortiboy* toleration is secured on account of the drollery of his systematic stinginess and absurd persistence in small economies; indeed, the authors have succeeded in giving something of a comical air to his total want of affection for his son and his greedy anxiety to turn the prodigal into a source of profit. *Alcide Lafleur* is a more conventional villain, but he is portrayed with considerable vigour, and plays an impressive part in the story. It is, perhaps, a consequence of the force of these delineations that the more respectable characters wear rather an insipid air. In the loves of *Grace Heathcote* and *Frank Melliship* it is not possible to take very much interest, while *Mr.* and *Mrs. Heathcote*, the father and mother of *Grace* and *Lydia*, her sister, who appear and disappear at intervals in the

course of the representation, have but little real connection with the story in its dramatic form. The play is in four acts, and "unity of place" has been so much considered that each act consists of but one scene only. The authors, who are probably unpractised in writing for the stage, have undoubtedly accomplished the task they undertook with very commendable skill. They have here and there been embarrassed by the redundance of their materials, and the play of "Ready-Money Mortiboy" is certainly a work of inferior worth to the novel bearing the same name; still, in right of its freshness, force, and humour, the production well merited the hearty applause it obtained.

Mr. George Rignold has all the personal qualifications for the part of *Dick Mortiboy*, and plays with his usual energy and something more than his usual judgment. But the chief success of the evening was obtained by Mr. Clifford Cooper in the part of *Ready-Money Mortiboy*. The actor's name may not be very widely known, but he is clearly in possession of an excellent histrionic method. His apparent unconsciousness of the presence of the audience is remarkable, the while he is able to present a highly artistic and thoroughly effective portrayal of the "rich and miserly banker," as *Ready-Money Mortiboy* is described in the play-bill. Miss Henderson is a most efficient representative of the bigamist *Polly Tresler*, *Dick Mortiboy's* wife, until the detectives discover her earlier marriage; and Miss Litton contrives, by grace of manner and intelligence of aspect, to lend all possible interest to the minor character of *Miss Heathcote*. Mr. Crosse, an actor new to London, appears creditably as *Frank Melliship*; and Mr. Edgar Bruce is a melodramatic impersonator of the villainous *Lafleur*.

LXXX.

"WIG AND GOWN."

[Globe Theatre.—April 1874.]

THE hero of "Wig and Gown," the new domestic drama, written by Mr. Albery, is a *Mr. Hammond Coote*, a barrister, to whom fortune has not been kind. No briefs ever come to him, and, moreover, there are constitutional difficulties in the way of his professional progress. He is without much self-respect; he is absurdly timid and irresolute; and, as he himself explains, is far more likely to be worried by witnesses than to be able to worry them. He clings to his status as a barrister, however, is duly provided with wig and gown, and boasts a share in chambers and in a clerk; but he, in truth, subsists by letting furnished lodgings. The income thus derived is most insufficient to meet the requirements of himself, his rather ambitious wife, who affects to have aristocratic relations, his daughter *Victoria*, and his two sons; and the many miserable shifts and subterfuges the family are compelled to resort to in order to maintain their position, in appearance at least, are very fully set forth. But there is a sudden change in the prospects of the *Cootes*. Just as *Mrs. Coote*, despairing of her husband's advancement at the bar, is about to cut up his stuff gown in order that she may make a new jacket for her younger boy, a brief, with a cheque for fifty guineas, is delivered to the barrister. It is to appear for the defendant in an ejectment case regarding the ownership of the Kenreutic estates, a claimant to these having presented himself in the person of one *James Strickett*, pretending to be the lawful son and heir of the late *Lord Kenreutie*. The defendant is the *Hon. Miss Kenreutie*, sister to the late lord, who chances to be a lodger in *Mr. Coote's* house, and who conceives an extravagant idea of the abilities of her landlord, much as Betsy Trotwood in "David Copperfield" over-estimates the mental endowments of Mr. Dick. *Mr. Coote*, however, is indebted for his brief less to the friendship and admiration of *Miss*

Kenreutie than to the machinations of one *Sonbyson Siel*, long connected with the *Kenreutie* family, and now, for purposes of his own, plotting with the impostor *Strickett* to obtain possession of the estates. It is *Mr. Siel's* plan that *Miss Kenreutie* shall suffer defeat owing to the incompetence of her advocate. The cause is duly tried, and *Mr. Coote's* mistakes are many and serious. He establishes to the disadvantage of his client the fact that the late *Lord Kenreutie* had secretly married and had left a son, the lawful issue of that union. But when there is an endeavour to prove that *James Strickett* is no other than this son, *Mr. Coote* performs really important services. It is true that he deprives his client of the estates, but he absolutely overthrows the plaintiff's case. For the facts that come out in evidence awaken memories of his own early life; link by link the chain of circumstances becomes more and more complete; he loses his diffidence and displays extraordinary energy, satisfactorily demonstrating at last that he is himself the rightful heir to the *Kenreutie* property. He had been a foundling, left with a miniature portrait and a few papers that are now of significance in proving his identity with the missing child of the late lord. *Mr. Siel* faints away in the witness-box, and it is understood that with the claimant, *Strickett*, he will be prosecuted for perjury. *Miss Kenreutie* cheerfully recognises the superior title of *Mr. Coote*; and, surrendering the estates to him, is more than ever satisfied of his great abilities as an advocate; but there is now no further need for him to toil at the bar, and, retiring from the profession, he hands over his wig and gown to be the playthings of his children. Here the play should close, but in order that it may possess a third act, *Mr. Albery* has tacked on much superfluous matter touching the loves of *Victoria*, *Mr. Coote's* daughter, and *Fred Fairfoot*, a young surgeon, and the difficulty experienced in inducing *Mrs. Coote*, now *Lady Kenreutie*, to consent to the union of the young people. These proceedings have an air of after-thought about them, and wholly fail to interest; but they serve the dramatist's purpose in delaying the fall of the curtain, although at the price of inflicting considerable weariness on the audience.

The story of *Mr. Hammond Coote's* fortunes and misfor-

tunes is humorous and ingenious enough, but in reducing it to a dramatic form the author has shown but indifferent skill. Mr. Toole's presence in the play is perhaps the excuse for its farcical excesses, verging occasionally upon buffoonery, although Mr. Toole has often demonstrated that he can act with artistic forbearance when so permitted by authors and audiences; but, in spite of certain improbabilities that disfigure it, the fable does not seem to invite the rude and reckless treatment to which it has been subjected. The first act displays creditable workmanship; the story is clearly opened, the characters are introduced with tolerable adroitness, and the humours of shabby gentility are presented in rather a new light. *Mr. Coote* is not, perhaps, a very probable barrister, and his condition altogether seems certainly exceptional; still, he is diverting, and even interesting, after a fashion. But in the second act the story moves so sluggishly that there seems danger of its stopping altogether while a burlesque representation of a court of justice occupies the scene; insomuch that when the one strong dramatic point of the play is reached, and *Mr. Coote* makes the important discovery that his own history is involved in his client's defence, the attention of the audience has been so disturbed, and the art of the dramatist has proved to be so much at fault, that the effect created falls far short of what might legitimately have been anticipated. However, "Wig and Gown" contains many amusing scenes, is admirably acted, and secures a most flattering reception from the audience. The dialogue is throughout of a very vivacious description, aiming at laughter at all hazards, but less marked by those strainings after rather abstruse witticisms which have usually blemished Mr. Albery's writings. Of course, in the part of *Hammond Coote* Mr. Toole finds abundant opportunity for the exhibition of that drollery which is his especial property; and it need hardly be said that he spares no exertions to obtain and to deserve the applause of his audience. The other characters are of minor importance, but Mr. Cecil's artistic performance of the judge in the trial scene is worthy of commendation, while Mr. Brough's care to invest the part of *Sonbyson Siel* with life and force merits recognition. *Fairfoot*, the young surgeon, is person-

ated by Mr. Temple; Miss Carlotta Addison appears as *Victoria Coote*; and Miss Lavis undertakes the character of the vulgar and pretentious *Mrs. Coote*.

LXXXI.

"THE CLANDESTINE MARRIAGE."

[Gaiety Theatre.—April 1874.]

THE old comedy of "The Clandestine Marriage," which has not been represented for some seasons, has been revived in order that Mr. Phelps may appear as *Lord Ogleby*, a part in which he is quite without a rival. "The Clandestine Marriage," originally produced at Drury Lane Theatre in 1766, is the joint composition of George Colman and David Garrick, who obtained suggestions and materials for their play from various sources. The story avowedly owes its foundation to Hogarth's prints of "Marriage à la Mode," the authors avoiding, however, the more grim and tragic portions of the artist's plan; from a paper contributed by the Earl of Cork to "The Connoisseur" was mainly derived the humours of *Mr. Sterling's* rural life and passion for landscape gardening; while the earlier farce of "Lethe" had supplied characters corresponding to *Lord Ogleby* and his valet *Canton*. It has been alleged, indeed, that these characters, and also the part of *Mr. Sterling*, with much of the dialogue they are required to deliver, were directly taken from a farce called "False Concord," written by the Rev. James Townley, Master of Merchant Taylors' School. The statement, however, has never been substantiated, and certainly seems to be improbable. As George Colman the younger said of it: "It would be strange if Garrick robbed, or were accessory to his colleague's robbing, his friend Townley." Moreover, "False Concord" was never published, and was represented but once, on a benefit night at Covent Garden. The success of "The Clandestine Marriage" was not immediate; indeed, some opposition was stirred by the play; but the high spirits and vigour of *Mrs. Clive* in the part of the chambermaid in the last

scene are said to have silenced dissent and secured the fall of the curtain to great applause. This last act is clearly due to Garrick, and is a notable example of his skill in stage contrivance and his consummate knowledge of theatrical effect. The authors quarrelled—owing, it was understood, to Garrick's refusal to appear as *Lord Ogleby*, the character expressly devised for him, and a controversy subsequently arose, which has never yet been satisfactorily adjusted, as to the precise amount of labour contributed by each to the joint production. Probably the responsibility was divided between them in almost equal shares; but the matter is now hardly worth discussion. The original *Lord Ogleby* was King, an admired comedian, whose success in the character was very great, notwithstanding Garrick's opinion—"he certainly has great merit in the part, but he is not *MY Lord Ogleby*." It was as *Lord Ogleby*, it may be remembered, that the late Mr. Farren, who had been long a distinguished representative of the part, bade farewell to the stage some twenty years ago. Mr. Phelps has in late times assumed the character on various occasions, and always to the satisfaction of his audience. His impersonation is as remarkable for its humour and force as for its artistic elaboration. *Lord Ogleby's* foibles are presented in a sufficiently ridiculous light, while yet in right of his courtliness and a measure of magnanimity that he displays in his later scenes he does not fail to enlist the sympathies of the spectators, who are eventually persuaded both to like him and to laugh at him too. At the Gaiety the comedy is played in four instead of five acts, but little of the original text has been omitted, with the exception of the scene between lawyers *Traverse* and *Serjeant Flower*, which has no real connection with the story, and is suppressed without inconvenience. Mr. Phelps obtains commendable support from the members of the Gaiety company. Mr. Hermann Vezin is an efficient *Lovewell*, and Mr. Harcourt, although his high spirits are rather forced, does not spare zeal in his representation of the lively *Sir John Melvil*. Mr. Soutar is amusing in the part of *Canton*, the caricature of a Swiss valet, originally impersonated by Baddely, famous for his success in such characters, and as the actor to whose will the Drury Lane company is indebted for a twelfth-cake, consumed

in the green-room of the theatre every year on the 6th of January. *Mrs. Heidelberg*, who is evidently a kinswoman of *Mrs. Malaprop's*, but who came upon the stage some ten years before that more celebrated lady, is played by *Mrs. Leigh*, perhaps with more energy than humour. *Mr. Maclean* appears as the City merchant, *Sterling*; and *Miss Sterling* and *Fanny* are fairly represented by *Miss Baldwin* and *Miss Loseby*. *Mrs. Clive's* part of the chambermaid is intrusted to the competent hands of *Miss Farren*.

LXXXII.

"SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL."

[Prince of Wales's Theatre.—April 1874.]

THIS highly embellished edition of "The School for Scandal" can only be likened to one of those ornate revivals of Shakspeare which distinguished *Mr. Charles Kean's* management of the Princess's. Extraordinary pains have been taken to perfect the representation even to the most minute details; there has been considerable change in the old-established method of performance, and great ingenuity has been exercised, in combination with very liberal expenditure, so to reset and renovate the play as to endow it with uncommon attractiveness in the eyes of modern playgoers. Only a thorough artist could have achieved such consummate stage pictures of life in the last century as are here presented; only a diligent student of costume could have attired the actors in a manner that is at once so appropriate and so elegant. And yet it can hardly be doubted that many objections to this new treatment of an old work will be raised; that there will be lamentation over the sacrifice of those stage traditions which have come to be considered in the light of vested interests; and that prophecies of evil will be heard touching the first invasion of the domain of comedy by the spirit of spectacle. But if "The School for Scandal" was to be played at all at the Prince of Wales's Theatre, it is clear that it must

have been produced "with a difference." The establishment has its prescriptions; it has acquired fame by the special character of its representations and the perfectness of its scenic decorations. Further, the limited size of its stage precludes the performance of a standard comedy after the forcible and highly coloured fashion adopted in larger houses. Change, in the way of "toning down," became indispensably necessary, and certain transpositions of the author's text, so as to avoid scene-shifting difficulties, have been judged expedient. The system of dramatic construction that has regard to "unity of place" was little valued in Sheridan's time, while the stage was then wholly unacquainted with the elaborately "set" and profusely furnished scenes which are now so much in vogue in our theatres. On the whole, the rearrangement of the play to suit it for performance at the Prince of Wales's Theatre inflicts no real injury upon the author's design; although it would certainly be more seemly if *Sir Peter's* squabbles with his spouse could be conducted in his own house rather than in the drawing-room of *Lady Sneerwell*, and if the play could close in *Joseph Surface's* library in preference to the residence of the *Teazles*, where, after the great catastrophe of the screen, *Mr. Surface* could hardly have presumed to appear. That *Charles* should sell his pictures in his dining-room without moving to another apartment for the purposes of the auction is decidedly advantageous to dramatic effect; and the other minor changes that have been adopted tend at any rate to the greater compactness of the play, although there seems to be no very obvious reason for the suppression of *Sir Peter's* scene with his ward *Maria*, in which he urges her to accept the suit of *Joseph Surface*. Of the performance it may be said, that if it makes no specially salient displays of ability, it charms, nevertheless, by a certain air of harmony and finish that characterises it. Probably very few of the players have ever before sustained parts in "The School for Scandal," and yet there is scarcely an instance to be discovered of any sinking below the level of respectability, while on every side there is evidence of heedfulness and discipline and respect for histrionic art. That there is some shock to prepossessions, in the first instance, is indisputable, when established points are seen

to be systematically avoided, when new "business" is substituted for old, and when there occurs reduction of the prominence usually attaching to particular scenes in favour of less familiar portions of the play. Still Sheridan is really found to be himself, and not less enjoyable than heretofore, for all the novelty and splendour of his present guise; and there is pleasure to be derived from such careful productions of last-century drawing-rooms and such adroit dressing and posing of the *dramatis personæ*, who wear the look, indeed, of animated portraits by Gainsborough and Sir Joshua. Even the minuet introduced in the second act, without any warrant for such a proceeding being discoverable in the text, may readily be forgiven, in right of its fidelity to past fashion and the extreme grace and skill with which it is accomplished by Miss Josephs, Miss Wilton, and their partners. Interest of an antiquarian kind is stirred, too, by *Sir Benjamin Backbite's* being viewed as a representative of the Maccaronis—"the travelled young men," as Walpole described them, "who wear long curls and spying-glasses." A Maccaroni, with his affected airs and fanciful attire, is not now a very conceivable creature, and in such wise an annotated edition of the comedy may some day be judged advisable, which may explain further, among other matters, the references to "the Irish Tontine" and the introduction here of "Nova Scotia sheep." Mr. Coghlan's *Charles Surface* is a spirited assumption, that would have been notable in any representation of the comedy, and there is real merit in Mr. Bancroft's interpretation of the much more arduous character of *Joseph Surface*. The actor is careful to invest the part with the youthfulness of appearance which legitimately pertains to it, and, remembering that *Joseph*, for all his staidness of demeanour, enters freely into fashionable society, has restrained his hypocritical and sentimental airs within becoming bounds. Judgment has been exercised, too, in dealing with *Joseph's* addresses to *Lady Teazle*; it is discreetly indicated that his love is merely simulated, and is but a part of his scheme for possessing himself of the hand and fortune of *Maria*. As *Lady Teazle*, Miss Maria Wilton displays great vivacity and intelligence; her tiffs with *Sir Peter* could not be more adroitly carried on, while her speech at the close of the

screen scene is most effective from the simple pathos of its delivery. Her ladyship is more of the country hoyden—a squire's daughter fresh from her tambour frame and Pope Joan with the curate—less of the consummate woman of fashion, than she is usually represented to be. Mrs. Jordan's interpretation of the part, however, was probably much as Mrs. Bancroft's is. Mr. Hare's *Sir Peter* is remarkable for its elaboration and finesse, but is curiously and unfortunately deficient in humour. Miss Josephs is all that could be desired as *Lady Sneerwell*, and Mrs. Murray is a competent *Mrs. Candour*. Mr. Collette does justice to the part of *Sir Oliver*, and Mr. A. Wood's *Crabtree* would be irreproachable if he could refrain from adding to the text he is required to deliver. After mention of the double letter from Northamptonshire, *Crabtree* is not required by Sheridan to express doubt as to whether the postage was or was not paid upon that famous missive. In so laborious a revival it is certainly surprising to find that any of the old and unjustifiable "gags" should be retained by the actors.

LXXXIII.

"LED ASTRAY."

[Gaiety Theatre.—July 1874.]

MR. BOUCICAULT'S new drama proves to be little more than a literal translation of M. Octave Feuillet's five-act comedy of "*La Tentation*," first represented in Paris at the Théâtre du Vaudeville in 1860, and some five years afterwards, under the name of "*A Dangerous Friend*," played in English at the Haymarket Theatre. The events of the story are supposed to be of modern occurrence, the scene is laid in Normandy and Paris, and the characters are French, with the exception of *M. Georges Gordon Trévélyan*, who is understood to be a poet of Irish origin, and a certain *Cowperson*, a comic Englishman, with so imperfect a command of the French tongue that he is frequently compelled to express himself in his own language. In aid of the

interpreter of this part, M. Feuillet on publishing his play provided instruction on the subject of English pronunciation. *Cowperson*, admiring the estate of the *Comte de Vardes*, is required to say, "This park and mansion are indeed beautiful! How much they remind me (*sic*) the shady avenues and lofty turrets of Walsing Hall!" According to M. Feuillet, the French actor should pronounce these words as though they were written:—"Pârk annd mannshone ère inndîd biautifoul! Haou meutch zey rimainde mi ze shédé avénious annd lofté tarrets of Walsinnng Haul!" This strange Englishman, *Cowperson*, has been converted by Mr. Boucicault into an Irish major named *O'Hara*, while the Irish poet, *Trévélyan*, appears in "Led Astray" as *George de Lesparre*, a French novelist. The other alterations introduced by Mr. Boucicault consist chiefly of the substitution of the names of *Rodolphe*, *Hector*, *Armande*, and *Mathilde*, for those of *Gontran*, *Achille*, *Camille*, and *Hélène*, which M. Feuillet has bestowed upon his *dramatis personæ*—a change apparently due rather to capriciousness than ingenuity on the part of the English playwright. The title of "Led Astray," it may be noted, conveys an unjust idea of M. Feuillet's story. His heroine is much tempted, is, indeed, always on the brink of error, but she does not really fall into it. The *Count*, her husband, goes astray, no doubt, but then he is not led, but rather a leader in the direction of vice. The defect of the play arises from the inability of these characters to arouse more sympathy than they deserve in the minds of the audience. The *Count*, addicted to field sports to the neglect of his wife, is a pompous, self-satisfied person, priding himself upon his high sense of honour, yet carrying on a disgraceful intrigue in his own house with an Irish adventuress, the sister of *Major O'Hara*. The *Countess*, sighing for the appreciation she fails to obtain from her husband, affects superior intelligence, gives way to sentimentality, and delights in the admiration she secures from the novelist, *George de Lesparre*. A duel is fought between the husband and the lover. The husband is wounded, but he has yet the lover's life at his mercy. The *Count*, however, for all his airs of rage and jealousy, is well satisfied of his wife's innocence in regard to *George de Lesparre*. She has been guilty of not loving her husband;

but he is himself a far greater offender—he has not only not loved his wife, but he has loved somebody else. *George de Lesparre* is spared, therefore, and forthwith prudently disappears from the play. For some time husband and wife live apart, although the same roof shelters them. They desire for their daughter's sake to keep up the appearance of agreement and to avoid scandal. The arrangements for their daughter's marriage bring about their reconciliation, or rather the patching up of a sort of truce between them. They are a very ill-yoked couple, but there is hope that as they grow older they may grow less foolish and more tolerant of each other's irremediable imperfections. In this way the play comes to a fairly comfortable conclusion. It is of undue length, and especially tedious in its earlier scenes. M. Feuillet writes plays after a novelist's fashion, developing his fable very gradually, overcrowding the scene with incidents and characters, dwelling much upon detail, and deferring the excitement of interest until risk has arisen that the audience may lose patience altogether. The later passages of the story—notably the artificial quarrel over the card-table between the husband and the lover, which may have been suggested by a scene in "Esmond," and the duel in the wood—are sufficiently dramatic, however. Mr. Boucicault's translation is of a commonplace kind, and, for so experienced an author, appears to be especially deficient in terseness. The scenes affecting to be humorous do not move much mirth, although the rivalry and jealousy of the two mothers-in-law—the *Countess Chandoe* and the *Baroness de la Rivonnière*—might have proved amusing in a play depending less for success upon melodramatic expedients. The acting displayed painstaking and good intentions on the part of all concerned; still the performance of "La Tentation" in Paris must have been something very preferable to the representation of "Led Astray" in London. Possibly English acting is seen almost at its worst when engaged in a work so essentially French as is this of M. Feuillet's. Miss Helen Barry as the *Countess* appears to some advantage in the lighter moods of the character, but the tragic scenes towards the close of the drama clearly overtax the actress's physical powers and her present command of her art. The *Count* is personated by Mr. Charles

Thorne, who is said to have played the part with much success in America, and who now makes his first appearance upon the English stage. Mr. Thorne is without doubt an actor of force and intelligence, but his portrayal of a French nobleman is not altogether acceptable. Mr. Thorne is in full possession of all the peculiarities of American speech, and his acting is further marred by his excessive consciousness both of himself and of his audience. Still the actor impresses the spectators and fairly wins their applause in right of a certain natural vigour and heartiness which belong to him. The "creator" of the part of the *Count* was the late M. Lafont—within certain limits the most perfect actor of his time. Mr. Thorne is not by any means a Lafont, but his performance warrants expectation in regard to the other characters in his repertory. *Achille*, the friend of the family, who acts as a sort of chorus to the play, and is in truth a character very common upon the French stage, is represented by Mr. Stuart Robson, another actor from America. Mr. Robson's merits are not remarkable; he appears to be one of those unamusing low comedians who are already too numerous in our theatres.

LXXXIV.

"THE BELLS."

[Lyceum Theatre.—October 1874.]

MR. BATEMAN, entering upon the fourth season of his management, has reproduced the "psychological" drama of "The Bells," with, of course, the admired Mr. Irving as the representative of the guilty burgomaster *Mathias*. To this curious dramatic study by MM. Erckman-Chatrian, translated and modified by Mr. Leopold Lewis, the success of the Lyceum during the past three years has been much indebted, while the vitality of the work and its power to impress and attract evidently remain unimpaired. It is true that "The Bells" in a great measure charms by terrifying, and that the interest it excites is rather of a

nightmare quality ; it may reasonably be found by the weaker brothers among our playgoers somewhat too dreadful to be wholly entertaining ; nevertheless the work possesses the rare merits of originality and completeness, while it affords signal opportunities to an actor skilled in a certain class of tragic impersonation. As *Mathias* Mr. Irving first obtained recognition for any intensity and ingenuity of histrionic method for which he had not previously received due credit. Well known as an actor of sound intelligence, of force, and even of humour, with an inclining to the order of characters usually assumed upon the French stage by the late M. Lafont, it was as *Mathias* that Mr. Irving exhibited ability to vie with the style of acting of Frédéric Lemaître. For *Mathias* is a part of melodrama, in right of the literalness of treatment required of the player. The burgomaster is no hero, and can claim no place in poetic tragedy. The prosaic nature of his crime is much insisted on, and it has been the object of the original authors to exhibit his punishment after the very plainest fashion. As well might poetry be looked for in the details of a post-mortem examination. *Mathias* drinks to excess the white wine of his country to steady his nerves for a while in order that he may drown care and remorse. A debauch on the eve of his daughter's wedding with *Christian*, a sergeant of gendarmes apt at bringing criminals to justice, and *Mathias* passes a most restless night, dreaming horribly. His dream, a remarkable instance of the artistic contrivance of the authors, is a strange compound of possibilities and impossibilities, fact and fiction. He fancies himself upon his trial for the murder committed fifteen years ago. Then a mesmerist he had lately seen performing at a fair appears in court, and under an exaggerated estimate of the forces of animal magnetism the criminal is constrained not merely to avow his guilt, but by an elaborate system of postures and gesticulations to represent dramatically every incident of the crime. *Mathias* awakens at last suffering the agonies of strangulation. It seems to him that the hangman's rope is already round his neck. He lives but a few moments, scarcely recognising the members of his family who have gathered about him. But his sin remains a secret. So far the murder of the Polish Jew is left

unavenged. It is never known to his kindred and friends, neighbours and fellow-citizens, that their *Mathias* had been guilty of murder. To them the criminal will be always "good Mathias;" by them his memory will be ever treasured and respected. But how severely *Mathias* has in truth suffered, the audience have been permitted to see. He has led a life of torture, and the spectacle of his agony has been presented with extraordinary force. The drama may be supposed to point the moral that sin surely entails punishment, and that men's estimates of their fellows are oftentimes fallible enough. How skilfully Mr. Irving interprets this character of *Mathias* it is not necessary again to set forth. The performance remains substantially what it was three years ago, with here and there, perhaps, some further minuteness of rendering, and a tendency to the heightening of colour, which certainly was never deficient in force. But even if offence to good taste may be occasionally risked, and if the highest qualities of histrionic art are to be denied to the representation, it yet remains an achievement rare upon the modern stage, and one of which any actor might well be proud. And in such a character, it is to be remembered, considerable license must of necessity be permitted the player. There is no prescribing exactly how much or how little an audience should be shocked, or the means that may legitimately be employed to excite and to awe. Mr. Irving's success is complete, and his command over the attention of his audience does not halt for a moment. He may fairly claim the distinction of having brought tragedy again into fashion, so far at least as the tragic exhibitions of an individual actor are concerned. A taste for old tragedy, with its long list of killed and wounded, is not perhaps to be revived. And possibly old tragedy was not so highly admired as it seemed to be. Even Dryden found occasion to observe that "in all our tragedies the audience cannot forbear laughing when the actors are to die; 'tis the most comic part of the whole play." But that dramas with "a happy ending" are not indispensably necessary to the comfort of a modern audience the success of "The Bells" has sufficiently demonstrated. At the Lyceum a serious catastrophe once tolerated, applauded even, Mr. Irving has been allowed

further ventures in the direction of tragedy. And now the plays in which he appeared assumed a more poetic complexion; at least they were composed of blank verse of a more or less musical and regular kind. To "The Bells" succeeded "Charles the First," and then followed "Eugene Aram." Mr. Irving's next essay of importance, it seems, is to be "Hamlet."

LXXXV.

"HAMLET."

[Lyceum Theatre.—November 1874.]

"HAMLET" has not yet shared the fate of certain of Shakespeare's other plays and been made the subject of ornate "revival:" archæology and spectacle appearing in conjunction with and deriving valuable aid from ballet-dancers, brass-bands, and what the playbills call "hosts of auxiliaries." Something of unusual embellishment the tragedy received when the late Mr. Bellew provided mute performers and scenic appliances by way of fortifying the effect of his readings of "Hamlet." There was then some searching of old authorities on the subject of architectural decoration, and care was taken that the characters should wear garments of the fashion of the tenth century. For the first time the *Ghost* entered the *Queen's* closet, not clad in a suit of mail, but with flowing robes, "his habit as he lived;" and, also for the first time, *Ophelia's* corpse was borne upon an open bier, and not confined in a coffin or shrouded with the black velvet pall of modern funerals, while certain burial rites were introduced with the singing of an antiphon, justified, it was alleged, by study of the manners and customs prevailing in the Anglo-Saxon period. Still, although there was much of the stage in this entertainment, it was not wholly theatrical; it was an illustrated reading—Mr. Bellew in evening dress standing between his scenes and his audience as interpreter or lecturer rather than player. Even now, when, after "months of careful preparation" and many portentous managerial announcements, "Hamlet" is pro-

duced at the Lyceum Theatre, there is found to be no particular desire to garnish the play with spangles, with needless upholstery, or with swarms of supernumeraries. The scenic decorations are reasonably appropriate, but do not pretend to be of luxurious quality : there is thriftiness, indeed, in employing the view of the churchyard in which *Eugene Aram* was wont nightly to expire in great agonies a season or two ago as the background to the representation of the interment of *Ophelia*. Nor has much inventiveness been displayed in regard to the "business" of the stage, the position of the players, or the general method of presenting the play. It is true that the omission of any actual portraits of *King Claudius* and his murdered brother from the scene of the *Queen's* closet may count as a distinct improvement, and that certain passages suppressed in the ordinary acting editions of the play have been wisely restored. But the representation of the Murder of Gonzago by torchlight is not a happy example of stage management ; nor does there seem to be any good reason why *Hamlet* should carry with him a flaming torch when he meditates the murder of his uncle at his prayers : a more likely way of informing *Claudius* of the danger threatening him could hardly have been devised. Certain conventionalisms of performance that might well have been discarded have been devoutly preserved : *Hamlet* still paces the bleak platform of the castle while clad in pumps and the thinnest of black-silk stockings, and divests himself, in the old artificial way, of his hat and cloak immediately on the appearance of the *Ghost*, with a prescience that the warm work before him will counteract the "nipping and eager air" of night ; his abandoned clothes being with ludicrous zeal collected and carried after him, from a sense that he is sure to want them later on in the play, by his friends *Horatio* and *Marcellus*.

However, it soon became clear that "Hamlet" was produced less in the hope that the tragedy might prove attractive on the score of its own merits, or that it might provide opportunities for the display of scenery and dresses, than from a conviction that some excitement would be stirred concerning Mr. Irving's representation of the leading character. The result has fully justified this belief. Although Mr. Irving has on several occasions played

Hamlet in the provinces, he has now assumed the part for the first time in London. His performance attracted a very large audience, and, it may be said at once, secured every evidence of complete success. Mr. Irving was applauded as though he were another Garrick; he was recalled at every opportunity, and rewarded with as many crowns of laurel wreaths and bouquets of flowers as though he had been Mdme. Patti herself. This enthusiasm was no doubt excessive, but it may not be condemned as spurious, although certainly containing a suspicious element. Mr. Irving's *Hamlet* is the conscientious effort of an intelligent and experienced player, and presents just claims to respectful consideration and a fair measure of approval. It seemed, however, that the audience were predisposed to form an exaggerated estimate of the merits of the performance. In truth, the difficulty of winning favour in such a part as *Hamlet* is less great than is generally supposed. The character is well known among players to be secure of applause to any representative possessed of certain physical qualifications, some knowledge of the stage, and thorough acquaintance with the words of the play. Indeed, it is difficult to call to mind any representation of "Hamlet" which did not elicit an abundance of applause for its leading player: the actor of *Hamlet* is so helped by the nature of the speeches he is charged to deliver, by the incidents in which he takes part as the central figure, by the support he receives of necessity from the other characters, even when these are but indifferently personated. Mr. Irving, who invariably acts with extreme painstaking, was not likely to play *Hamlet* without careful study of the text. His rendering of the part, however, does not, perhaps could not, differ much from that adopted by preceding *Hamlets*. Such change of aspect as the part assumes is mainly to be attributed to the marked physical qualities of the actor. Some few new readings he has adopted, and here and there he has varied the traditional business of the scene; but substantially his *Hamlet* is the ordinary *Hamlet* of the stage, supplemented by the peculiarities of manner of his latest representative. A marked manner, it may be noted, has been possessed by every actor of distinction, and no charge can therefore be levelled against Mr. Irving on this account.

Still, a certain heaviness of movement, an occasional subsidence of interest which marked the progress of the performance, may be accounted for by Mr. Irving's limited compass of voice and lack of strength to sustain fully so arduous a character. Mr. Irving is far from a robust *Hamlet*, and is not one of those tragedians skilled in rumbling out soliloquies in deep chest notes. His voice seems sometimes artificially treble in quality and to be jerked out with effort. His movements are angular, and his bearing is deficient in dignity and courtliness, though not without a certain refinement of its own. There are artistic qualities in the representation, indeed, which are not to be denied; and if Mr. Irving scarcely impresses us so completely as did some earlier interpreters, he yet rarely fails to interest, and but for an unfortunate choice of costume of a strangely docked and confined kind, might always present a picturesque appearance upon the scene. In any case, for those who care to see "*Hamlet*" played at all, here is a *Hamlet* who is always zealous and thoughtful; often very adroit; who spares no pains to please; who has at command a certain feverish impetuosity, which, if it makes his passion sometimes too petulant, is yet surprisingly effective on the stage; and who is, in short, as complete a representative of the part as the modern theatre can furnish.

LXXXVI.

"THE MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR."

[Gaiety Theatre.—December 1874.]

SINCE the late Mr. Bartley withdrew from the stage in 1852, Mr. Phelps has remained in undisputed possession of the part of *Sir John Falstaff*. He has appeared, however, more frequently as the *Falstaff* of the First Part of "*King Henry the Fourth*" than in the less attractive *Falstaff* of "*The Merry Wives of Windsor*." Indeed, as an acting play, "*The Merry Wives of Windsor*" can scarcely be well known to our playgoers of to-day. It has been seldom seen since

its performance for some five-and-twenty nights in 1851, during Mr. Charles Kean's management of the Princess's Theatre, when the *Falstaff* of Bartley was supported by the *Ford* of Mr. Kean, the *Mrs. Ford* of Mrs. Kean, the *Mrs. Page* of Mrs. Keeley, the *Pistol* of Mr. Ryder, and the *Slender* of Harley. At this time, too, Mr. Keeley appeared as *Sir Hugh Evans*, Mr. Wigan as *Dr. Caius*, and Mr. Meadows as *Slender*. All the musical embellishments which had been engrafted upon the comedy in the course of its conversion into an opera by Reynolds in 1824 were now discarded; it was decided that the poet's text should be strictly respected, and the work presented in its integrity. For not only has "The Merry Wives of Windsor" been treated formally as a libretto by the composers Nicolai and Balfe; it was scarcely ever performed between 1824 and 1851 without musical interruptions and interpolations by Bishop and others. Reynolds, who had previously manipulated "The Comedy of Errors," "Twelfth Night," and "The Two Gentlemen of Verona" to suit the requirements of composer and vocalists, did not hesitate to deal in like fashion with "The Merry Wives of Windsor." The parts of *Mrs. Ford* and *Mrs. Page* were accordingly assigned to singers such as Miss Stephens, Miss Cubitt, or Mdme. Vestris, with liberty to halt the action of the play every now and then when it seemed good to them to execute "I know a bank" or some such melody; for the introduced songs were invariably fitted to words culled somewhere or other from Shakspeare. So, too, the great Mr. Braham appeared as *Master Fenton*, a part having about it something of the "walking gentleman" quality that is dear to tenors, and in the midst of his wooing of *Anne Page*, with almost imbecile irrelevancy, treated the audience to "Blow, blow, thou winter wind," and other songs. It was Reynolds's excuse that but for his alterations, which he held to be "advantageous to the managers and without injury to the immortal bard," the comedies in question would not have been represented at all. A more worthy conviction now prevails, however, and it is felt on all hands that Shakspeare must no longer be made "an excuse for a song," to employ *Charles Surface's* phrase. It is sufficient that the poet should be occasionally regarded as an excuse for "correct costumes"

and "spectacle;" but even when that happens, care is now taken that the original text shall be unalloyed, and that a fair measure of respect shall be paid to the intentions of the dramatist.

The revival of "The Merry Wives of Windsor" at the Gaiety Theatre is altogether of a creditable kind. As a rule applause is sought only on the score that the management has provided as complete a representation of the comedy as the existing condition of the stage will admit of. Otherwise Shakspeare's play is left to speak for itself. It is true that Mr. Arthur Sullivan has added music of a tuneful and vivacious character to the closing scene of the comedy, when *Falstaff* is plagued and pinched by the children disguised as fairies; but here an orchestral accompaniment is almost indispensable except in the judgment of those who would be more precisely Shakspearian than Shakspeare himself. Indeed, the only serious attempt at enrichment of the text incurred, curiously enough, the decided displeasure of the audience. By way of substitute for *Anne Page's* canzonet, "Fie on sinful fantasy," a new song is introduced, "Love laid his sleepy head on a thorny rosy bed," the words being written by Mr. Swinburne and the music composed by Mr. Sullivan. But the song is a superfluity which may well be suppressed in future performances of the comedy. Generally, the success of the representation was quite beyond question. The scenic decorations are liberal and tasteful enough, and the landscape exhibiting Herne's Oak and the panoramic view of Windsor Forest is a good example of modern painting for theatrical purposes. Still, no attempt is made throughout the performance to gratify the eye at the expense of the other senses. A company of more than average strength has been engaged, and pains have been taken to secure adequate representation of every character in the long list of *dramatis personæ*. If now and then the attention of the audience seemed to abate in some measure, allowance must be made for the nature of the entertainment set before them. The comedy wears, perhaps, a more antiquated air than other of the comedies of Shakspeare; its humour depending more than ordinarily upon foibles of manner that depart almost with the age that saw their birth. Usually, indeed, comedies

should enjoy briefer life than tragedies, for the former relate to matters of temporary interest and ludicrousness, while the latter possess pathetic qualities that should endure so long as fellow-feeling lasts. But the archaic character of certain of its scenes notwithstanding, "The Merry Wives of Windsor" affords unbounded satisfaction to an audience composed, as the Gaiety audience seemed to be in great part, of those unversed in the subject of the play. The vigorous humour of its character and the practical drollery of its incidents stirred much laughter and won cordial applause. Of the *Falstaff* of Mr. Phelps it is perhaps needless to say much. The veteran actor's performance is now what it has been for many years past. Something it lacks no doubt, not so much of humour as of geniality and jovialness. Perhaps *Falstaff* can only be represented thoroughly by one whose corpulence is due to nature rather than to art, although the author of the "Curiosities of Literature" has noted that the Falstaffs of the early stage were not nearly so stuffed and wadded as the Falstaffs of later times. The spectators of Elizabethan times could perhaps supply from their imaginations the necessary amount of corpulence as readily as they could suppose the stage furnished with scenery and other adornments. Still, Mr. Phelps's *Falstaff*, if now and then over-sententious in manner and inclined to a deliberateness of elocution that is wearisome to the ear, well merits the applause it obtains, in right of its vigour, incisiveness, and complete mastery of the text. Among the other performers well entitled to approbation may be mentioned Mr. Arthur Cecil, whose performance of *Dr. Caius* is of singular animation and humour; Mrs. Wood, whose *Mrs. Page* is distinguished by an admirable delivery of the dialogue and keen perception of the fun of the situations in which she appears; and Mr. Vezin, who plays *Master Ford* with rare spirit and intelligence—if with an eye to Mr. Charles Kean's method of interpreting the character. Mr. Belford is an efficient *Mr. Page*; Mr. Maclean personates *Justice Shallow*, and Mr. J. G. Taylor spares no pains to invest the part of *Slender* with the humour that is its due.

LXXXVII.

"THE DREAM AT SEA."

[Adelphi Theatre.—January 1875.]

GEOFFROY, the French critic, has defined melodrama to be "an opera in prose, which is not sung, but merely spoken, and in which music discharges the duty of a valet-de-chambre, her office being simply to announce the actors to the audience." The production of melodrama in England seems to have been due, however, rather to accident than to design, and without any very clear conception of the nature and constitution of the matter in question. It is true that Holcroft's "Tale of Mystery," an adaptation from the French, supplied with music by Dr. Busby, and produced at Covent Garden in 1802, has been usually accounted the first work of the class ever performed in this country; but plays with musical accompaniments had long before been familiar to our minor theatres as a means of evading the restrictions imposed upon them to the advantage of the patent houses. The regular spoken drama could be exhibited only at Drury Lane, Covent Garden, and the Haymarket during the summer months; but it was somehow established that "burlettas" could be presented upon any stage licensed by the magistrates for entertainments of music and dancing. No care was taken, however, to define in what a burletta really consisted; it was soon manifest that its etymological connection with the word burlesque was not by any means to be insisted upon; and presently under the pretext of performing burlettas every kind of theatrical entertainment was produced—from "Macbeth" down to "Tom and Jerry." And especially was the term employed to cover productions which could only properly be described as melodramas. At the Adelphi Theatre, indeed, which, from the first opening of its doors in 1802 down to the present time, has always been famed for its performances of this character, the managers sometimes, in their endeavour to combine accuracy of description with

regard for legality, resorted to rather complicated announcements. Thus Mr. Fitzball's "Pilot"—an adaptation to the stage of Fenimore Cooper's novel—was described in the playbills of the time as "a nautical melodramatic burletta." But usually, until the abolition of the privileges enjoyed by the patent theatres rendered further employment of the term altogether needless, "burletta" was the general title applied to every play performed at a minor house; and it was, accordingly, as a burletta that Mr. Buckstone's "Dream at Sea" forty years ago made its first appearance upon the stage. Upon its recent revival at the Adelphi Theatre, however, with a view to the gratification of the playgoers of to-day, the "Dream at Sea" is properly described as a melodrama; and, indeed, it is a melodrama of a very uncompromising kind. Whether the disinterment of the work was altogether an expedient proceeding is a question perhaps concerning the manager of the theatre more than any one else; but, at least, it may be stated that the performance of the "Dream at Sea" is of interest chiefly to theatrical antiquaries. There is something possibly in the nature of melodramas that compels them to grow old with greater rapidity than plays of a more sober character; the time arrives when situations cease to thrill and effects no longer startle as once they did, and over the whole work there descends like a pall or a wet blanket a sense of its infirmity and decay. In some way it would seem as though the spectators had been behind the scenes of these old-fashioned productions, noting the clumsiness of their artifices, the poverty of their cunning, and the thinness of their disguises. And then modern burlesque has made serious havoc of by-gone melodrama. There is lack of faith in the audience, who will no longer connive at their own delusion and excitement; while the players are dispirited by the futility of their attempts to conjure with contrivances long since exploded and found out. Nevertheless the story serving as the foundation of the "Dream at Sea" is not deficient in certain romantic and dramatic qualities. A sailor lover, one *Launce Linwood*, dreams while at sea—the dream being simply narrated, not exhibited, in the form of a vision—that his mistress, *Anne Trevanion*, has been in peril of her life. He hastens home—the scene of the story being laid upon

the coast of Cornwall—to learn that *Anne Trevanion* has really been murdered. In her lover's absence it seems *Anne* has been compelled by her father—one of those imperious parents who have always abounded in the theatre—to accept the suit of his nephew, *Richard Penderall*. A ball has been given in celebration of the forthcoming marriage; Sir Roger de Coverley has been danced, and the healths of the affianced couple have been formally toasted. But one *Black Ralph*, a wrecker, has intruded upon the festivities in quest of plunder, with the excuse that he aims at providing his family with bread. Suddenly encountering *Anne Trevanion*, *Black Ralph* has felled her to the ground. He effects his escape, and seeing that while attacking her he had chanced to wear the cloak of her lover, suspicion falls upon *Launce Linwood*, who is indeed formally accused of the murder, to which it is supposed he has been prompted by jealousy. *Anne Trevanion* is buried in the village church on the cliffs; but soon it is made evident that she has been buried alive. *Launce Linwood*, animated by a desire to contemplate once more the face of his beloved, digs up the body; when lo! she sits up in her coffin, and finally addresses her lover by his Christian name. Of course when this incident is reached the end of the story is in sight. The true lovers are made happy, and *Black Ralph* saves trouble by perishing of an exceptional kind of remorse. He frankly avows that in the way of his business as a wrecker he has knocked many a man on the head without suffering any inconvenience afterwards from that summary mode of dealing with his fellow-creatures; the murder of *Anne Trevanion*, however—for he believes himself guilty of no less a crime—is something more than even his robust conscience can digest and dispose of, and consequently he expires. These serious events are intermingled with comic incidents, which have lost somehow the power of moving laughter in any great degree. The usual soubrette is present throughout the play—linked to its interest by the fact that she is the foster-sister of the heroine—and is furnished with a lover, the muffin man of her native village. A third comic character is an overseer and tax-collector, who meets with many misadventures, and incurs much derision from the other *dramatis personæ*, but whose humour, generally con-

sidered, is certainly of a cheerless kind. The players spare no exertions to give life to the drama, and the *Launce Linwood* of Mr. Fernandez, the *Biddy Nutts* of Miss Hudspeth, and the *Tommy Tinkle* of Mr. Fawn—a spirited low comedian from the Surrey Theatre—meet with considerable applause. But, upon the whole, the “Dream at Sea” must be said to be but an inferior production, feebly written, constructed with little art, and interesting only to those playgoers who care to make acquaintance with a work which enjoyed great favour forty years ago.

LXXXVIII.

“OUR BOYS.”

[Vaudeville Theatre.—January 1875.]

MR. BYRON’S new comedy of “Our Boys” deals with the familiar differences arising between old heads and young hearts, and exhibits once more the proneness of sons to set at nought the systems devised by parental authority for their discipline and advantage. The “boys” of the story are *Talbot Champneys* and *Charles Middlewick*, who have become fast friends on the strength of a chance meeting on the Continent. To the mothers of these youths the audience are not introduced; their respective fathers are *Sir Geoffry Champneys*, a baronet proud of his ancient descent, and *Perkyn Middlewick*, an uncultivated and, indeed, uncouth old gentleman, who has acquired a large fortune by enterprise and industry in the retail butter trade. Both *Sir Geoffry* and *Perkyn* have bestowed liberal education upon their boys; but *Sir Geoffry* is a strict parent, greatly addicted to lecturing and admonition, while *Perkyn*, the fondest of fathers, has treated his son with almost extravagant indulgence. Thus *Talbot* is on somewhat frigid and distant terms with *Sir Geoffry*, while the relations existing between *Perkyn* and *Charles* are most cordial and intimate. Nevertheless, when demand is made upon the sons for obedience to parental behests, both are alike rebellious. *Talbot*

declines to marry the bride selected for him by his father, preferring *Miss Mary Melrose*, whose wealth consists simply in gifts and graces, to her cousin, *Miss Violet Melrose*, who, in addition to these advantages, possesses a considerable amount of funded property; while *Charles Middlewick*, who has secured the affections of *Miss Violet*, refuses to withdraw his claim to her hand at the dictation of his father, unreasonably wrath at some saucy reference the young lady has made to his early experiences as a butterman. With the view of bringing them to their senses and to penitence, the sons are turned out of doors and bidden to earn their living as best they may. It is perhaps by way of satire upon the systems pursued in their education, that they are found very ill qualified to fight the battle of life and to obtain bread in exchange for their labour. They are reduced to great poverty, dwelling in the attic of a London lodging-house of inferior character, and compiling a Gazetteer for a bookseller who remunerates them very indifferently for their services. They are quite resolved, however, that they will stand out to the last against the parental despotism of which they consider themselves to be the victims, and this condition of estrangement between the sons and their sires endures for some months. It is the fathers, indeed, who first manifest symptoms of yielding; for, prompted alike by curiosity and affection, they visit furtively the garret inhabited by their boys. The reconciliation which now clearly impends is for a while rendered impossible, however, owing to the discovery of a bonnet in the chamber of the young men, and to the suspicions affecting in consequence the rectitude of their moral principles and method of life. To the *Misses Melrose* also, who have sought their lovers in the hope of solacing them in their suffering and poverty, the bonnet is the sower of much mortification. But it is soon explained that this unlucky article of dress belongs in truth to *Talbot Champneys'* aunt, *Miss Champneys*, an elderly lady, whose only apparent mission in the drama is to bring about this rather unpleasant imbroglio towards its close. The fathers are then reunited to their boys, to whose marriage with the partners of their choice all opposition terminates, and the curtain descends upon a scene of affectionate congratulation and rejoicing.

"Our Boys," in common with other of Mr. Byron's works, is unduly leavened with farce, and can boast little correspondence with nature and reality. There is no good reason for the constant companionship of such antipathetic characters as *Sir Geoffry* and *Perkyn Middlewick*, while the violence of the latter in discarding his son simply because he would marry an heiress who has spoken disrespectfully of the butter trade, is very unintelligible. The characters are not new to the stage, with the exception perhaps of *Talbot Champneys*, who, his educational advantages notwithstanding, appears to be a curious combination of the "cub" and the fop, until love and misfortune stir within him generous sentiments, and develop the worthiness of his real nature. The part is played with genuine art by Mr. Thorne, who delivers a few pathetic lines in the closing scene with a discreet ingenuity worthy of high praise. But, with many defects, "Our Boys" possesses advantages which ensure for the work the favour of the audience. It is amusing from first to last; there is hardly, indeed, a dull minute in the course of the play, which abounds in animation, movement, and intrigue, if it excites no interest of a sentimental kind; while the dialogue is of Mr. Byron's best, each character talking like a professional jester bound at all costs to educe laughter from his auditors. The last act of the comedy is the least to be commended, for here a distasteful element is introduced, and there is interruption to the good-humoured flow of the narrative; or perhaps it should rather be said that amusement is excited by inharmonious and injudicious means. *Mr. Middlewick*, the butterman, personated with sound, strong humour by Mr. David James, soon secured for himself the warm approval of the audience, who greeted his drollery of aspect and bearing, his ill-treatment of his native language, and his constant allusion to the wares that formerly constituted his stock in trade, with incessant laughter. *Mr. Middlewick*, indeed, will probably take rank among the most popular creations and personages of the modern stage. Mr. Farren imparts a certain distinction to the rather shadowy character of *Sir Geoffry*, and Mr. Warner is a competent representative of *Charles Middlewick*. The ladies of the play are not invested with much dramatic importance, and can scarcely rise above a common-

place level. Miss Bishop portrays efficiently the more sentimental *Violet*, and Miss Roselle gives the needful measure of grace and vivacity to *Mary Melrose*, who has inclinations in the direction of coquetry.

LXXXIX.

"A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM."

[Gaiety Theatre.—February 1875.]

"A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM" has been reproduced for the sake of Mr. Phelps, whose representation of the character of *Bottom the Weaver* first won popularity at Sadler's Wells in 1853. Indeed, since the death of the comedian Harley in 1858 the part has remained the undisputed possession of Mr. Phelps, and upon every subsequent revival of the play he has renewed his successes as *Bully Bottom*. Care has been taken, however, to render the performance at the Gaiety as complete as possible in every respect; the scenic embellishments leave little to be desired, and the musical accompaniments, without which the work could hardly be presented to the playgoers of to-day, are, upon the whole, very well executed. It has been the fate of "A Midsummer Night's Dream" to be repeatedly viewed almost as the libretto of an opera. It was produced under the title of "The Fairy Queen" at the Theatre Royal in 1692, with the addition of numerous songs, dances, and mechanical effects. "The Court and town," records a critic of the time, "were much satisfied with 'The Fairy Queen,' but the expense attending it was so great that the company got very little by it." In 1716, Leveridge, a bass singer, who has been credited with the composition of the words and tune of the "Roast Beef of Old England," the air of Gay's ballad of "Black-eyed Susan," and the "Macbeth" music usually ascribed to Locke, derived from "A Midsummer Night's Dream" a masque entitled "Pyramus and Thisbe," which in 1745 became a sort of comic opera with music supplied by John Frederick Lampe. Ten years

later Garrick, summoning to his aid certain Italian singers, presented the play in a mutilated form as "The Fairies." Colman tried a similar experiment in 1763, when the work was performed with the addition of some thirty songs and the suppression of great part of the mock tragedy of "Pyramus and Thisbe." Bishop's music was composed for the version of "A Midsummer Night's Dream" prepared by Frederick Reynolds for performance at Covent Garden in 1816, and has since been rarely separated from the play. Mendelssohn's famous overture was first published in 1826; the composer's arrangement of the play, in accordance with the desire expressed by Tieck, with additional music, being first performed on the 14th of October 1843, at the New Palace at Potsdam, and repeated a few days afterwards at the Berlin theatre. Shakspeare's text was first respected and restored to the stage by Mdme. Vestris, when she revived "A Midsummer Night's Dream" with a strong caste and very splendid accessories at Covent Garden Theatre some five-and-thirty years ago. The lady's good example has been followed by all managers who have subsequently ventured to represent the play.

Of necessity the conditions of theatrical performance, even when these have been controlled to the utmost by discretion and ingenuity, are fatal to the grace and delicacy of such a poem as "A Midsummer Night's Dream." It was after witnessing a representation of "The Tempest" that Hazlitt declared his unwillingness to witness again any theatrical exhibition of a play of Shakspeare's, and suggested doubt whether all stage renderings of the poet did not result to his injury. The shadows and spirits of Shakspeare, the creatures of his fancy, pertaining to a world of dreams and visions, can meet with but very gross interpretation at the hands of ordinary flesh and blood. In the theatre, fairies, however described by the dramatist as capable of creeping into acorn cups and hanging dewdrops in the ears of cowslips, must be embodied and portrayed by ballet girls more or less muscular and agile, and as little like spiritual creatures as well can be. *Oberon* and *Titania* must find representatives in ladies able to do justice to Bishop's music; and the part of "that shrewd and knavish sprite" *Puck* can but be allotted to a youthful performer of

the female sex, skilled in posture-making, lively of gesture, and unhesitating as to revelation of form. On these accounts "A Midsummer Night's Dream" might fairly be dismissed from the catalogue of acting plays; and probably every student of Shakspeare would assent to its being thus relieved of liability of a histrionic kind. Nevertheless, it may be assumed that the play was certainly written for performance in the theatre, and at a time when scenic illusion and stage artifice depended almost entirely upon the imagination of the spectators; when boys personated the fairies and other female characters in the drama, and hangings of tapestry did duty for painted scenes. To a modern audience the play is reduced almost to the level of a fairy spectacle of commonplace quality; the poetry of the subject lies hidden under stage carpentry or evaporates as a subtle and volatile ether in the process of transfer from the library to the stage. No doubt the numberless exquisite passages in the play would not fail in their power to charm if only reasonable competency were entrusted with their delivery. But elocution is one of the neglected arts of the modern stage. In ordinary cases it perhaps does not greatly signify how much or how little the auditor misses of his author; but it is certainly hard that lines and speeches of exceeding beauty and value should be muttered rather than uttered with the haste and unintelligence of a schoolboy hurrying over the recital of a lesson. Still, it may be said that this representation at the Gaiety is of a meritorious kind, the condition of the modern stage being borne in mind. Indeed, the play could scarcely have been so efficiently represented at any other London theatre. Of Mr. Phelps's performance of the part of *Bottom* it is needless to say much. It is exactly now what it was twenty years ago: over-elaborate and over-deliberate, grotesque rather than humorous, needlessly repulsive, yet abounding in force, and well entitled to the distinction of originality and novelty of conception. Mr. Phelps is well supported by Mr. Lyall as *Quince* and Mr. Righton as *Flute*. The characters of *Oberon* and *Titania* are creditably sustained by Miss Loseby and Miss Ritta; while Miss Pratt renders important aid as the first fairy, who is entrusted with so large a share of the musical illustrations of the play. Miss Helen Douglas plays

Hermia with grace and intelligence, if with insufficient force; the lovers *Lysander* and *Demetrius* being represented by Mr. Robertson and Mr. Charles Creswick. *Puck* is performed with much vivacity by Miss West; the songs connected with the part being entrusted, inexplicably enough, to the tenor and bass singers, Messrs. Cotte and Ledwidge.

LXXXIX.

“AS YOU LIKE IT.”

[Opera Comique Theatre.—February 1875.]

WHEN, after the reopening of the theatres at the Restoration, the plays of Shakspeare gradually found their way back to the stage, they wore usually a changed and ill-treated look. They were in the condition of straggling and wounded soldiers rejoining the main body of their comrades at the close of a severe engagement. They had been condemned by the Puritans, and they were now to suffer violence at the hands of the adapters, who accounted Shakspeare's writings to be but rough-hewn material which they were at liberty to shape anew, so that the taste of a later public might be the better suited. The delightful pastoral of “As You Like It” underwent specially cruel treatment of this kind. Until 1723 it had escaped notice; then a certain Mr. Charles Johnson took it in hand, with a view to rearranging it for theatrical exhibition. He is described in biographical records as the author of a score of tragedies, comedies, and farces—coarsely garbled versions, for the most part, of plays by Shakspeare, Beaumont and Fletcher, Cowley, Shirley, and others; a portly, pleasant gentleman, “famous,” states an authority, “for writing a play every year and being at Button's every day.” He had married a young widow with a fortune, and had further prospered as a tavern-keeper in Bow Street. His mangled and mutilated edition of “As You Like It” was called “Love in a Forest,” and was played at Drury Lane, the actors Booth, Wilks, and Theophilus Cibber being included in the cast. The

characters of *Touchstone*, *Audrey*, *William*, *Corin*, *Phœbe*, and *Sylvius*, Mr. Johnson thought it expedient to suppress altogether. He added little matter of his own originating, but what with transpositions and interpolations from other plays, he converted the comedy into a sort of Shakspearian patchwork. The wrestling match he changed to a knightly combat in the lists. *Charles* accuses *Orlando* of treason, and the speeches from "Richard the Second" relative to the quarrel between Norfolk and Bolingbroke are introduced. *Jaques* is supposed to be the lover of *Celia*, and is allowed to borrow freely from the sallies of *Benedick* in "Much Ado About Nothing;" while *Rosalind* is intrusted with *Viola's* descriptive passage, "She never told her love," from "Twelfth Night." One of the soliloquies of *Jaques* is composed of scraps from *Benedick* and *Touchstone*, with certain feeble essays of Mr. Johnson's muse employed in the way of connecting links. In the last act the mock play of "Pyramus and Thisbe" from "A Midsummer Night's Dream" is introduced, or rather dragged in, and the comedy concludes with the happy union of *Rosalind* and *Orlanao* and of *Jaques* and *Celia*, the original epilogue being omitted. "Love in a Forest" enjoyed representation upon some half-dozen occasions, and was then finally abandoned. "As You Like It," in accordance with the poet's text, was first restored to the theatre in 1740, and has since held a firm position in the list of acting plays; in part, no doubt, because of its own supreme merits and the public recognition these have obtained, but also in part because to every actress of distinction the character of *Rosalind* offers irresistible temptations. It has been sustained by Mrs. Pritchard, Mrs. Barry, Mrs. Woffington, Mrs. Jordan, and Mrs. Siddons, to name no more; the interpreters of tragedy and comedy having alike included it in their repertory, viewing the part as a sort of neutral ground, independent of professional classification, and open only to the most able and accomplished. In truth, *Rosalind* is not to be described as tragic at all; yet the romance, the sentiment, the tenderness of the character commend it to the actresses of tragedy, while its sportiveness, its wit, its archness, always subject it to the claim of those comedy actresses who are not content merely to provoke laughter. No doubt the

doublet and hose of *Ganymede* have been considered as hindrances by certain artists; Miss O'Neil, indeed, on this account shunned the part altogether, while, for like reasons, Mrs. Siddons, who first played *Rosalind* on the occasion of her benefit in 1787, took refuge in a costume of very strange device. As her friend Miss Seward wrote, "Her dress was injudicious. The scrupulous prudery of decency produced an ambiguous vestment that seemed neither male nor female." Altogether, the great actress failed as *Rosalind*; her performance was found to be "totally without archness;" for once in her career she was destined to see a character she had appropriated wrested from her. A far more admired and successful *Rosalind* was found in Mrs. Jordan. Campbell the poet, who wrote a laudatory memoir of Mrs. Siddons, was yet moved to declare that Shakspeare himself, if he had been a living spectator, would surely have gone behind the scenes to compliment the *Rosalind* of Mrs. Jordan.

The revival of "As You Like It" at the Opera Comique, although the performance has something about it of an impromptu air, is of interest in its way, and well entitled to public regard. Four of the more prominent of the *dramatis personæ* are, at any rate, creditably sustained; while there is no lack of good intention and painstaking in the representation of the subordinate characters. From the *Rosalind* of Mrs. Kendal certain poetic qualities may be missing; the lady's artifice is oftentimes too obvious, and she is apt to be over-conscious both of herself and of her audience. Nevertheless, her performance charms in right of its grace, its frank vivacity, its bright intelligence, and what Coleridge would call its "femininity." Mrs. Kendal's best acting is in the forest scenes, her first act being decidedly inferior. Throughout the play she obtains valuable support from the alert manliness of Mr. Kendal's *Orlando*. Mr. Cecil displays genuine humour and originality as *Touchstone*, although breadth may be absent from his method of portraying the character. It is something, however, to hear such appreciative and skilful utterance of Shakspearian wit. *Jaques*, a part that has usually proved acceptable to actors of tragedy—for, if avoided by Garrick, Kemble, and Kean, it can count among its interpreters such famous performers as Booth, Quin, Barry, Sheridan, and Mac-

ready—is allotted at the Opera Comique to Mr. Hermann Vezin, an artist enjoying a just reputation for the good taste and expertness he has manifested in his every theatrical assumption. Mr. Vezin wins well-deserved applause by his elocutionary adroitness in dealing with the long speeches of *Jaques*. Among these, however, it is to be regretted that stage custom has authorised the inclusion of the First Lord's description of *Jaques* himself, and his moralising upon the wounded stag. Nor, although also supported by custom, can *Rosalind's* borrowing of the "cuckoo song," from "Love's Labour's Lost" be permitted to pass without rebuke.

XC.

"THE MERCHANT OF VENICE."

[Prince of Wales's Theatre.—April 1875.]

AN attempt to represent Shakspeare's play of "The Merchant of Venice" at the Prince of Wales's Theatre has been attended with only partial success. Probably the experiment was undertaken rather to surprise than to content the public. For some years the theatre has been devoted to the performance of dramas having little in them of passion or romance, and thus a school of acting has been established excellent in its rendering of the prose, the affectation, the languor, and the drawling undemonstrativeness of modern life and fashion, but peculiarly unsuited to present histrionic exhibitions of a loftier and more heroic nature. Shakspeare, for the adequate interpretation of his works upon the stage, needs the services of players who can show strong feeling, and deliver his language with art and force. No doubt it is well now and then to study his creations from new points of view, and especially to examine whether traditional and long-accepted methods of performance, however they may seem to be the result of experience and judgment, are not, in truth, mere artifices and mannerisms of the players of the past. But efforts to subdue the poet to the tameness of modern life, to reduce

his sustained speeches to disjointed chat, and to impart to his plays generally an air of the boudoir or the drawing-room, could scarcely satisfy even the audiences of to-day, who are certainly, as a rule, to be entertained upon very easy terms. Fortunately for the performance of "The Merchant of Venice" at the Prince of Wales's Theatre, the cast includes a young actress who has but now joined the company, and who brings to her impersonation of *Portia* sounder and safer views as to the due rendering of the poetic drama. Miss Ellen Terry, who in her early childhood served an apprenticeship at the Princess's Theatre under the rule of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Kean, is now an artist of real distinction. With all the charms of aspect and graces of manner indispensable to the impersonation of the heiress of Belmont, Miss Terry is gifted with a voice of silvery and sympathetic tone, while her elocutionary method should be prized by her fellow-actors. *Portia* has been presented now with tragedy-queen airs, and now with vivacity of the soubrette sort—as when in Garrick's time Mrs. Clive played the part and made a point of mimicking the more famous barristers of her time; indeed, a nice combination of stateliness, animation, sentiment, archness, poetry, tenderness, and humour is required of the actress intrusted with the character. Miss Terry's *Portia* leaves little to be desired; she is singularly skilled in the business of the scene, and assists the action of the drama by great care and inventiveness in regard to details. There is something of passion in the anxiety with which she watches *Bassanio's* choice of the leaden casket; while the confession of her love which follows upon that incident is delivered with a depth of feeling such as only a mistress of her art could accomplish. Thus it chanced that, probably for the first time, the portions of the play that relate to the loves of *Portia* and *Bassanio* became of more importance and interest than the scenes in which *Shylock* appears. Mr. Coghlan has proved himself on frequent occasions an actor of intelligence, and his opinions touching the character of *Shylock*, if he could but express them clearly, might possibly be of a valuable kind. But the result of his performance is to reduce *Shylock* to quite a subordinate position in the drama. The early actors of the eighteenth

century were apt to treat the character as one pertaining to comedy if not to farce; *Shylock* was to them a ludicrous Jew, wearing a red beard and otherwise of very grotesque appearance. Macklin first restored Shakspeare's Jew to the stage, and his treatment of the part has been adopted more or less by all subsequent performers. With the single exception of Garrick, every English tragedian pretending to fame has undertaken the character at some period of his professional career. And it is not clear that *Shylock* is susceptible of much variety of interpretation. He appears in but three scenes of importance, and is described by Hazlitt as "a man brooding over one idea, that of his wrongs, and bent on one unalterable purpose, that of revenge." By accident or by intention, Mr. Coghlan makes *Shylock* a man of indistinct character, weak and irresolute of mind, assuming at times a certain hard vehemence of action under which no genuine passion lies, but generally mild of demeanour and slow of speech, much addicted to muttering, and incapable of investing his utterances with anything like incisiveness of tone or pungency of sarcasm. It was something strange to hear *Shylock's* quick irony and bitter retort, his fierce vindictiveness and grand bursts of passion, in which, nevertheless, a curious vein of pathos and plaintiveness is to be discerned, all delivered in the same dreary monotone, the blank verse broken up into prose, and the scene generally disturbed by long pauses and imperfect management of the voice. Of course such a *Shylock* could scarcely stir or impress, and he left his audience at last more apathetic than he found them. If admiration is to be won by the performance, it must be solely on the score of its novelty; it is certainly most unlike any preceding representation of *Shylock*. Miss Carlotta Addison is a satisfactory *Nerissa*, Mr. Archer a respectable *Antonio*, and Mr. Bancroft imparts some importance to the *Prince of Morocco*, who, with his rival, the *Prince of Arragon*, is restored to the stage from which "acting editions" have usually banished him. The *Bassanio* lacked dignity of bearing, and the *Gratiano* was too laboriously humorous to amuse. The reception of the representation was not wholly cordial, the spectators at times manifesting impatience and disappointment. Interest, however, attaches to the production

because of its *Portia* and the pictures, at once brilliant and careful, of Venetian life in the sixteenth century which occupy the stage. Mr. Gordon's scenery is so admirably painted and contrived that the small space at the command of the performers is never perceived as a defect; the costumes and accessories are remarkable for their picturesqueness not less than for their richness and appropriateness. Since Mr. Kean, in 1858, converted the play into a pageant and a spectacle, "The Merchant of Venice" has not been so handsomely cared for by upholsterers, dressmakers, scene-painters, and "property" manufacturers.

XCI.

"MONEY."

[The Prince of Wales's Theatre.—June 1875.]

LORD LYTTON'S "Money," although during its thirty-five years of existence it has been subjected to very considerable wear and tear, yet remains in full possession of its force and effectiveness as an acting play. In truth, the work could hardly exhibit signs of fading or decay as a picture of life and manners, for in advantages of that kind it was particularly deficient from the first, insomuch that its earliest critics promptly condemned it as a farce enriched with a serious part for Mr. Macready. Lord Lytton, however, if careless as to the strict conditions of legitimate comedy, was skilled in the arts of pleasing a general audience and of providing capital opportunities for histrionic display. He had the support, moreover, of a very strong company, of which but three members of any note now survive—the original representatives of *Sir Frederick Blount*, *Georgina Vesey*, and *Clara Douglas*. The story of the play is in itself trifling enough, and is not set forth with any special art, its main interest and the happiness of the hero depending upon his discovery of the fact that a bank-note for £5 had been sent to his old nurse *Mrs. Staunton*—who throughout remains invisible to the audience—not, as he had

been led to imagine, by *Miss Georgina Vesey*, but by *Miss Clara Douglas*. Still, such well-contrived scenes as the reading of old *Mordaunt's* will to his kindred, and the gambling at the club-house, would almost be sufficient to account for the success of the play, while the writing is throughout vigorous and adroit, if the speeches delivered by *Evelyn* seem occasionally adapted rather for the lecture-room than the stage. In favour of *Evelyn* himself there is little to be said. He is not so unprincipled as Lord Lytton's other stage hero, *Claude Melnotte*, and yet he is by no means so interesting or so picturesque. He is intensely vain, self-conscious, peevish, and capable of very ill-behaviour, as when, in the presence of *Clara*, who has rejected him, and for the express purpose of wounding her, he offers his hand and heart to *Georgina*. It is not surprising that Macready accepted with reluctance the part his friend the dramatist had written for him, although the "doubt and misgiving" of which the tragedian makes confession related less to the moral nature of *Evelyn* than to the value of the character for stage purposes. "I have nothing great or striking in situation, character, humour, or passion to develop," Macready records in his diary, with a hint of his fear that *Evelyn* would be subordinated in public opinion to the characters of *Sir John Vesey*, *Mr. Graves*, and *Clara Douglas*. Even during the first success of the comedy the actor maintained that *Evelyn* was an "ineffective, inferior part." Nevertheless, Macready's *Evelyn* was invariably well received by the audience, and contributed in no small degree to the favour which "Money" enjoyed during its first season. It is true that the tragedian was rather a mature-looking hero in 1840, for he was then nearly fifty; but in regard to personal graces and matters of costume he had sought the valuable aid of Count D'Orsay, whose counsels were also of service in the stage management of the club-scene; and the public of that date was accustomed to and even relished long speeches, however inclined to be of a stilted and inflated nature, when delivered with the elocutionary art and the earnestness which Macready had invariably at command. Nowadays it must be confessed that *Evelyn* seems to be a somewhat tedious and oppressive personage, obtaining but an inferior measure of sympathy

and respect from the audience. Mr. Coghlan, however, spares no effort in his impersonation of the character, plays throughout dexterously, and is careful to regard the probabilities of tone and gesture in delivering the numerous diatribes and sallies with which *Evelyn* is intrusted. In other respects the play is well represented at the Prince of Wales's, albeit the cast of characters has undergone some deterioration as compared with the performance of two seasons back. Miss Marie Wilton was so admirable a *Georgina Vesey* that it is to be regretted she should now relinquish that part to appear as *Lady Franklin*, a character originally sustained by Mrs. Glover. Widows upon the stage have long been divided into two classes: widows young, graceful, and sparkling, such as appear so constantly in the comedies of M. Scribe; and the more formidable widows, substantial of form and occasionally forbidding of aspect, such as figure considerably in old English plays. *Lady Franklin* may well be endowed with charms of person and manner, and yet the author had clearly in view a certain robustness and solidity of beauty when he first brought the character upon the scene. Indeed it now becomes necessary to alter the text to suit the existing facts of the case, and *Graves* is made to describe her ladyship as "a nice little" instead of a "monstrous fine" woman. However, there is no real reason why *Graves* should not forget his sorrows and his "sainted Maria" at the bidding of the arch and vivacious *Lady Franklin* of Miss Marie Wilton, although he has more frequently been seen to surrender to the imposing presence and commanding airs of a *Lady Franklin* of the school of Mrs. Glover. Mr. Hare having ceased to be a member of the company, the character of *Sir John Vesey* is now undertaken by Mr. Collette, who exhibits more force than humour or finish, and does not depart much from the conventional methods of delineating the elderly gentlemen of comedy. Mr. George Honey remains in undisputed possession of the part of *Graves*, and Mr. Bancroft continues to represent *Sir Frederick Blount* as one of the most amusing of stage fops. Mr. Archer is a competent *Captain Dudley Smooth*; and the rival politicians, *Lord Glossmore* and *Stout*, are fairly depicted by Mr. Teesdale and Mr. A. Wood. In the part of *Clara Douglas*,

Miss Ellen Terry displays grace and pathos, the scenes with *Evelyn* in which she rejects his suit and relates the story of her father's sorrows being skilfully and powerfully represented. *Georgina Vesey*, frivolous and foolish, yet true to her first love, *Sir Frederick*, is satisfactorily portrayed by Miss Carlotta Addison. The scenic decorations are new and unusually tasteful. Probably the elegance of a modern drawing-room has never been more completely reproduced upon the stage than by these interiors of the house now of *Sir John Vesey* and now of *Evelyn*. The club scene, always a good example of modern stage management, is represented with even increase of ingenuity and effect, and excites the liveliest demonstrations of approval.

XCII.

"MY AWFUL DAD."

[Gaiety Theatre. —September 1875.]

"MY AWFUL DAD" is, of course, a farce, and at least suggested by "the French." Mr. Mathews has justly won so much celebrity as an actor that there is a chance his exertions as an adapter may escape recollection. He is to be credited, however, with numberless dramatic trifles transferred from the Parisian stage, but very dexterously fitted for representation in English. The dialogue he delights in is recklessly facetious: all kinds of puns, odd turns of speech, and verbal quips and pleasantries are pressed into the service of his plays. He has been taught, however, by long experience of the theatre, that if he can but make his audience laugh, they are not likely to inquire too severely into the means he employs in effecting that object. It is curious that an actor whose method of performance is heedfully imitative of nature should so frequently appear in plays which cannot pretend to reflect reality with any degree of accuracy; still Mr. Mathews's farce is not that "grand grotesque of farce" of which Lamb wrote. He does not transport the spectators to a world of extravagance where

characters and occurrences are not to be tested by the standards of ordinary experience ; he rather by his own easy calmness of bearing and polished manner invites faith in the irrationality of which he is so often the hero. He preserves an air of every day amid the most unfamiliar scenes and incidents, and thus seems to leaven with probability circumstances which are hardly to be viewed as possible. "My Awful Dad" will not bear grave examination ; but the result in representation has probably surpassed the most sanguine expectation of the contriver of the play. The story is supposed to be of modern date, and the scene of action is laid now in the chambers of *Mr. Richard Evergreen*, a young barrister in the Temple, and now in the hall of the Sea View Hotel, Scarborough. *Mr. Adonis Evergreen*, the father of *Richard*, is the "awful dad" of the comedy. He is a spruce, sprightly gentleman of fifty, who has still a large stock of wild oats to sow ; whose manners are engaging, but whose morals are lax ; who outruns his income, keeps the worst of company and the latest of hours, and afflicts his son grievously by his dissolute life. In truth, *Mr. Adonis Evergreen* closely resembles in many respects the father of "Frou-frou," as interpreted by M. Ravel, who, it may be remembered, excused his recourse to hair-dye on the score of his being too disreputable to appear with grey locks. The situation of father and son is a reversal of the ordinary condition of things. The father is the prodigal ; the son indignant, stern, staid, hard-working, and paymaster for his sire's liabilities. *Mr. Adonis Evergreen* has taken up his abode in his son's chambers, and brings serious discredit and demoralisation upon that establishment. He has misdirected the fidelity of the laundress and employed the barrister's three clerks in running his errands to the pawnbroker's and elsewhere. He even ventures to receive his son's clients and to tender them advice touching questions of law ; for *Mr. Richard Evergreen*, it appears, regardless of professional etiquette, is in the habit of consulting with his clients without the intervention of a solicitor. Further, this ill-regulated parent has an objectionable way of shifting responsibility from his own shoulders by producing the visiting cards of his son whenever he finds

himself, as too frequently happens, involved in any considerable dilemma. The mortification of the respectable, plodding barrister is extreme, as one by one the misdeeds of the author of his being are revealed to him, and he is charged with erratic proceedings such as in his maddest moments he is quite incapable of. The play depends for success less upon any studied substantiality of plot than upon a rapid succession of funny incidents. *Mr. Adonis Evergreen*, invariably alert and good-humoured, flits through a series of quaint accidents and transactions, without failing for one moment to attach to himself the favourable opinion and the applause of his audience. No doubt much of his conduct is deserving of strenuous reprehension, but he is so convincingly the advocate and the representative of folly and frolic, that all sense of moral principle is held in suspense while he occupies the scene. In the end, the reputation of a rake which the younger *Evergreen* has acquired by means of the elder *Evergreen's* transgressions, secures for the barrister the hand of an heiress who does not desire a husband of too strait-laced a disposition. *Adonis* is also provided with a wife in *Mrs. Weddagain*, a young widow, who under the conditions of her deceased husband's will may not, without forfeiting her entire fortune, marry a second spouse who is less than fifty years of age. The lady, who had for some time lamented this restriction, is relieved of anxiety when she finds herself at liberty to bestow her hand upon so pleasant and well-preserved a suitor as *Evergreen* the elder; who, upon his part, his debts being all discharged by his son, promises to lead an irreproachable career in the future, and to make *Mrs. Weddagain* the very best of husbands.

Mr. Mathews is still without a rival upon the stage, and he plays the part of *Mr. Adonis Evergreen* in his happiest manner. His acting, indeed, differs little from what it has been for some years past. If here and there some decline of force or of volubility may be detected, the performance generally is surprising in its animation, humorousness, and power of entertaining. Hearty applause rewarded his efforts both as player and playwright.

XCIII.

"ALL FOR HER."

[Mirror Theatre.—October 1875.]

MESSRS. Palgrave Simpson and Herman Merivale, the joint authors of the new drama of "All for Her," announce in the playbills that *Hugh Trevor*, the most prominent figure in the fable, has been derived from the character of *Sydney Carton* in the "Tale of Two Cities," with "the express permission of the late Charles Dickens." Acknowledgment is, no doubt, due to the great novelist, for certain portions of his dialogue have been freely employed in the composition of the play, but in truth it is not so much the character of *Sydney Carton* that has been borrowed as the striking incident, towards the close of the book, of *Carton's* heroic rescue of *Evrémonde* from the prison of the Conciergerie, and subsequent death upon the scaffold in the stead of his escaped rival. *Hugh Trevor*, at the opening of the drama, is a dissolute, reckless, fallen gentleman of the Don Cæsar type, who seems to find in his own degradation some sort of vengeance for the wrongs he has suffered at the hands of society; for he is of illegitimate birth, his mother has been cruelly betrayed, and he subsists miserably upon a small pension, doled out to him by his father's lawful son, *Lord Edendale*. Further, he has to endure the bitter mortification of knowing that the woman he loves devotedly, a certain *Lady Marsden*, a North-country heiress and beauty is the betrothed wife of this same *Lord Edendale*. It is at the moment when he is the most maddened by drink and by jealousy that his half-brother's property and position and life are placed at his mercy. For discovery is made that the late Lord had been secretly married to *Mrs. Trevor*, the mother of *Hugh*, and that he is therefore the rightful heir to the *Edendale* title and estates; while at the same time it is disclosed that by reason of his complicity in the rising of '45, the so-called *Lord Edendale*, *Hugh's* half-brother, is liable to a traitor's doom, the officers of justice being already

upon his track. The play sets forth the awakening, under these conditions, of the genuine nobility of *Hugh's* nature. The purity of his love for *Lady Marsden* redeems him from the abasement and squalor in which he had rejoiced to live; he frees himself from the malign and rancorous thoughts and passions that had once enslaved him, and gradually he mounts to heroism: like *Henry Esmond*, he foregoes his claims to legitimacy and rank, destroying the proofs of his mother's marriage, and, like *Sydney Carton*, he surrenders his life upon the scaffold to ensure the safety of his half-brother and the happiness of *Lady Marsden*.

It is, of course, upon this character of *Hugh Trevor* that the play of "All for Her" bases its appeal for applause and distinction. The story it relates is not, perhaps, essentially novel, and the catastrophe pertains to the domain of deep tragedy; moreover, an opinion prevails, amounting almost to a superstition, that a drama dealing with a Jacobite plot is necessarily bound to be unlively and lowering: an unreasonable prejudice, very cramping to the British dramatist who would employ high treason for theatrical purposes, would subject his characters to the risk of capital punishment without involving them in forfeiture of public sympathy, but who, after '45, finds himself denied historical opportunities of the kind in question, unless he should venture to convert to the use of the stage the wretched Cato Street conspiracy. However, if "All for Her" deals with sombre matters and with incidents not absolutely new to the theatre, the drama notwithstanding possesses in an unusual degree the power of impressing and interesting a general audience. The work has been conscientiously planned and executed, and the writing is throughout of a dexterous and strenuous kind, rising occasionally to genuine eloquence and passion. Now and then, perhaps, there is a sacrifice of probability to stage exigency; something of vagueness attends upon the development of the plot; the characters seem to be influenced by inadequate motives; and an excess of narrative weighs down the dialogue. The love of *Mary Rivers*, the inn-keeper's daughter, for *Hugh Trevor* is but sketchily treated, while the sudden succumbing of the villain *Radford*, and the means by which this is effected, are not so much natural

growths of the plot as violent grafts upon it induced by the dilemmas of dramatic composition. Still the play thrives, and deservedly, in right of its dominant figure—the forcible and firmly drawn character of *Hugh Trevor*. The sacrificial act which closes *Hugh's* life and the play does not shock credibility; for the authors, while they have not flinched from making full exhibition of their hero's vices, his vindictiveness, intemperance, and morbid irrationality, have yet allowed it to be seen that the capacity for worthiness of thought and achievement really lurks within him, and that something of poetic fervour leavens even his worst infirmities. Dissolute and ragged, he is yet picturesque and gallant; at once a misanthrope and a debauchee, he is brave and tender nevertheless; and the crisis of his life arising, he devotes himself to death with a resolute zeal and an air of exaltation that are really grand. The part is one which any actor possessed of the due physical qualities might be proud to undertake; it affords grateful histrionic opportunities, and it appeals strongly to the imagination and the sympathy of an audience.

Mr. Clayton's impersonation of the character leaves little to be desired. Indeed the actor is enabled in the part of *Hugh Trevor* to win heartier recognition of his merits than has hitherto been awarded him. An artistic carefulness and consistency have invariably distinguished Mr. Clayton's exertions upon the stage; but he now displays unexpected skill in depicting vehemence of emotion and abandonment to the passion of the scene. No doubt his performance might be enhanced by a more discreet distribution of light and shade, by a more economic employment of his physical resources. In his desire to be animated and strong he is prone to an excess of emphasis, and in certain of his more declamatory passages he too nearly approaches the bombastic. Still he affects and kindles his auditors in a very marked degree. He has completely possessed himself of the character he represents, and never permits it for a moment to escape his grasp; he is always manly, alert, and energetic, and he imparts to the play the enthusiasm and excitement indispensable to its welfare. The final scene of the scaffold might, perhaps, be excised with advantage, and occasionally the dialogue in which *Hugh* takes part would

gain in effect by condensation; but, generally, the interest stirred at the rising of the curtain is sustained to its fall. *Lady Marsden* seems to be unavoidably but a weak heroine by the side of so robust a hero as *Hugh Trevor*, and from the point of view of the audience she labours under the defect of being a lady who has erred in her choice of a lover, in preferring to the devoted *Hugh* his rather indistinct half-brother; but Miss Coghlan, although her art stands greatly in need of refining influences, plays the part with a spirit and a command of vehement utterance that should be turned to good account upon some future occasion. It is much for a young actress to be able to express passion and to move commiseration, and on this account the absence of the minor conditions of good acting may perhaps be excused. Miss Caroline Hill exerts herself to endow with life the subordinate character of *Mary Rivers*; but the authors have scarcely provided opening for success in this direction. *Mary Rivers* is something too mysterious; and her assumption of male attire and acceptance of the post of page to the Hanoverian *Colonel Damer*, with a view to aiding the enterprise of *Hugh Trevor*, are measures that stand removed from ordinary powers of comprehension. It only remains to add that Mr. Horace Wigan gives proper significance to the part of the Government spy and "sequestration inspector," *Radford*, and that the representation has not lacked satisfactory assistance from the arts of the scene-painter and the costumier.

XCIV.

"RIP VAN WINKLE."

[Princess's Theatre.—November 1875.]

AFTER a lapse of ten years, Mr. Jefferson, as *Rip Van Winkle*, reappears in London, to find that at any rate no change has affected the relations subsisting between himself and his public. Time has not perceptibly thinned the ranks of his English friends, nor dulled their memory of his merits. The extraordinary success obtained at the

Adelphi in 1865 is now renewed and confirmed at the Princess's Theatre. The return of the actor—one of the very few genuine artists ever given or lent by America to England—is indeed greeted with an enthusiasm that must afford him real gratification.

If Mr. Jefferson is to be described as a player of one part only, it must be understood that this is because popular demand will have it so. He has at hand a whole gallery of impersonations; but his admirers are so delighted with one picture, that they persist in closing their eyes to the others. So it is simply as *Rip* that Mr. Jefferson is known on the London boards—the *Rip* of Washington Irving's story and of Mr. Boucicault's melodrama. Earlier adaptations of the tale to the stage are in existence, and indeed there had been *Rips* seen in London, though not perhaps of English growth, prior to the arrival of Mr. Jefferson. In 1833 and again in 1845 Mr. Hackett, once famed as the most popular comedian of America, was playing *Rip Van Winkle* at Covent Garden and the Haymarket Theatres. It was expressly for Mr. Jefferson, however, that Mr. Boucicault contrived his play, the chief faults of which arise from the excess of art employed in its conduct. The integrity of the original subject has been scarcely tampered with; but it has been surrounded with much alien matter—it appears embedded in new incidents and conditions. The drama is complete and most effective; nevertheless the spectator is troubled with suspicions that a theme so fantastic needed not treatment so formal, might have been presented to better advantage if left in the pleasant haziness of its original state. Mr. Boucicault, however, is a conscientious stage-carpenter, who delights in smooth planing, neat dove-tailing, and hitting every nail precisely on the head; he cannot bear to drop his curtain until he has duly allotted their proper shares of poetical justice to all his characters, and formerly wound up his play with a neat appeal to the audience. In truth, perhaps he has appreciated rather the prose than the poetry which lurks in the fable of *Rip Van Winkle*, all its merriment and extravagance notwithstanding.

The first impression induced by Mr. Jefferson in this part of *Rip* concerns his admirable picturesqueness as an actor.

He now seems to be a boor by Teniers, and now a grotesque figure by Callot, while his aspect in the later scenes, after his awakening from his twenty years' sleep, conveys suggestions of Tintoret or Titian. He has an ease of movement and a grace of attitude that owe nothing apparently to premeditation, but are yet invariably appropriate and of invaluable assistance to the illusion of the scene. He has that seeming unconsciousness of his audience which is the peculiar possession of actors of the first class, while he is, of course, thoroughly skilled in all the artifices of the stage, displaying his accomplishments, however, with rare moderation and discernment. His management of his voice is masterly; his tones are seldom raised above a conversational level; his distinctness of speech has about it no show of effort; yet every word he utters comes home to and tells upon his audience: the humour of his Dutch accent never being forced upon the ear as a thing necessarily demanding laughter, but employed with ease and calm, as though it were in truth inseparable from the actor's own natural method of utterance. It is simply by his surprising naturalness, indeed, that Mr. Jefferson commands applause in the earlier portions of the play. *Rip* is a tippler and unlettered; he loves the glass out of an inherent conviviality of disposition; but he is acute witted enough, and his sense of humour is exceedingly strong. He perceives something comical even in his own degradation and ruin; his weakness in resuming the evil habit he had "swored off" is to him more laughable than shameful; he is amused by his own apprehensions of his wife's scolding tongue; and though he reviles his vehement helpmate, it is without real bitterness, with a droll sense, indeed, that he fully merits her worst treatment of him. He is lazy, inebriate, worthless; he has squandered his property and topos at a tavern while his wife and children are left at home but scantily provided with food and raiment; yet he never loses hold upon sympathy. A certain tenderness of nature redeems him from absolute reprobation. It is pointed out that he is on excellent terms with *Schneider* and the other dogs of the village; it is shown that he is the intimate friend of the children, who trust him with all their thoughts and hopes, and share with him their simple happiness. Prettier scenes

of the kind can hardly have been presented upon the stage than those dealing with *Rip* and his daughter *Meenie* and her tiny boy-lover *Hendrick*, with the prattle of the little ones and the humorous notes and glances of the elder as he toasts them and their happiness: the actor here, be it said, receiving capital aid from his small playfellows—a very clever and well-trained little boy and girl. There is serious interest as well as comic further on, when *Rip* learns, from *Hendrick's* reading of the deed prepared by *Derrick*, that villany is afoot, and that there is a plot to rob him of the little that is still left him. Mr. Jefferson's remarkable command of facial expression becomes now of important service; his looks undergo curious variations, with every now and then a relapse into the old odd merriment and the laugh that is half of intelligence, half of intoxication. In the scene closing the first act there is perhaps tediousness of some five minutes' duration, owing to excess of insistence upon characteristics of *Rip* that have been already abundantly manifested; but there is genuine pathos in his final departure from his home at the fierce bidding of his wife. In the second act *Rip* enters the spirit-world and encounters the spectral bowl-players and the ghost of *Hendrick Hudson*—supernatural figures that might perhaps wear less palpable and substantial forms than are permitted them on the stage of the Princess's, although it should be said there has been considerable improvement in the scenic disposition of this portion of the drama since its last representation in London. Efforts are now demanded of the representative of *Rip* that may not be tested by reference to ordinary experience; he is shown under ideal conditions, amid most fantastic surroundings. *Rip* is gravely perplexed; his jocosity tempered with awe; his good spirits dashed by a sense that he is in the presence of unearthly creatures, and liable to their supernatural solicitings. He drinks to them, however, in his customary way from the cup they proffer him: then he sinks to the earth and sleeps for twenty years. His awakening is next exhibited. He is quite an old man now, although changed unconsciously, with the beard of *King Lear*, and strange shrill anile notes in his voice; the actor assuming with wonderful dexterity an air of sudden age that has something more than natural

about it ; he is racked with rheumatic agonies ; he moves with quaint stiffness ; his very form seems to have withered. He is as one half-dreaming, struggling to reconcile incongruities ; to join the past to the present, and to comprehend his prolonged slumber. There is much humour in all this, but it is of a subdued kind, and tenderly blended with pathos. In his alternate expression of hope and fear, when the peculiarities of his case have become intelligible to him, or nearly so, in his feverish desire to see and embrace his daughter, and then in his piteous appeal to her to recognise him, the actor displays histrionic art of the rarest kind, and affects his audience very profoundly. The whole performance is indeed one of veritable triumph ; it is difficult to believe that more consummate acting can ever have been seen in a theatre. If memory may be trusted, Mr. Jefferson's impersonation, while losing nothing of its force, has gained in refinement during his ten years' absence. Certain of his scenes have without doubt undergone revision, and are invested with a greater delicacy than originally characterised them.

The perfectness of Mr. Jefferson's art necessarily dwarfs his fellow-players and magnifies their deficiencies. A word must suffice in recognition of the spirit and intelligence of Mrs. Mellon's *Gretchen*.

XCIV.

“MASKS AND FACES.”

[Prince of Wales's Theatre.—October 1875.]

THE comedy of “Masks and Faces” by Messrs. Tom Taylor and Charles Reade first came upon the stage in 1852, when Mr. Webster was lessee and manager of the Haymarket Theatre, Mrs. Stirling his chief actress, and the late Mr. Leigh Murray a very admirable representative of the lovers and youthful heroes alike of the serious and comic drama. The success of the play endured for some seasons, and “Masks and Faces” took rank among the

"stock pieces" of the stage. But as, one by one, the players originally concerned in the performance quitted the scene, the play was less frequently presented; there seemed a prospect indeed of its fading from the list of "stock pieces" and falling into the category of "superannuated dramas"—works much respected but never played. From this fate, however, "Masks and Faces" has been for a while rescued by the management of the Prince of Wales's Theatre, a management that has of late exhibited a curious desire to astonish its patrons, and to be enterprising at all hazards. The authors, naturally sympathising with this revival of their early composition, have sought to benefit it by revision of the text and by additions to the dialogue; it may be found, however, that they but lengthened a play that was already abundantly long.

"Masks and Faces" is very carefully and conscientiously played, but it must be confessed that the comedy does not please as once it did. Applause it certainly obtains, but it scarcely stirs enthusiasm; it is found indeed to be tedious at times, and even to approach the dull. Yet the play is throughout well written, and the leading characters are limned with unusual force and distinctness. There is no lack of wit and pleasantry, and certain of the scenes abound in natural pathos. The dramatic interest, however, is far from strong, and the story is not constructed with much adroitness; the minor characters weary the audience without lending any appreciable support to the intrigue, and generally there is great disproportion between the words spoken and the deeds done. Assuredly the larger share of the original success of "Masks and Faces" must have been due to the players who first sustained the parts of *Triplet* and *Peg Woffington*, and who discovered in those characters more grateful occupation than they had ever obtained before or were ever afterwards destined to obtain. The authors have forborne to date their story; but its incidents might perhaps be assigned to the year 1750, a season or two before the retirement of Quin from the stage. Accuracy, however, has not been attempted; there has been no desire to set forth very precisely the facts of *Mrs. Woffington's* life, or to portray with any exactness the manners of the eighteenth century. Almost any other actress—Mrs. Old-

field, Mrs. Bracegirdle, Mrs. Cibber, or Mrs. Clive—would have served the purposes of the story just as well as *Mrs. Woffington*. But the actress who figures in the play proves to be a thoroughly effective part in representation ; she is a frail creature enough, forced to plead guilty to many sins and shames, leading a life of error and of degradation ; yet she is for the moment exalted and refined by her genuine love for a suitor she believes to be honest ; she is kind-hearted, generous, sympathetic, and genial ; she delights to soothe the sick and to cheer and help the unfortunate ; she wins her way to the hearts of the audience very shortly after her entrance upon the scene. *Triplet* affords an admirable contrast to this hearty, boisterous *Mrs. Woffington* ; a broken-down author, actor, and artist, hungry himself, and with a starving wife and family at home in his Grub Street garret, he is the wretched hack pictured by Hogarth, and described cruelly by Pope, tenderly by Goldsmith. Misery has crushed but scarcely soured him ; in his most desperate circumstances he rarely abandons the hope of fame and of future success. He is very gentle with his ailing wife, and forbearing with his unkempt, unfed children, who *will* play noisy games while, with an aching heart, he tries to write a comedy. *Mr. Ernest Vane*, a young country squire, pays court to *Mrs. Woffington*, concealing the fact that he is a married man ; thus he leaves his fair young wife, *Mabel*, exposed to the dishonourable addresses of *Sir Charles Pomander*, a town beau of evil reputation. A slight story arises from the combination of these personages, but the play deals rather with character than with plot. *Colley Cibber* and *Quin* are brought upon the scene, without saying or doing anything, however, to justify the distinction accorded them by theatrical history ; the two critics, *Soaper* and *Snarl*, appear at intervals, and prove themselves very dreary company indeed.

The performance suffers generally from the actors' excess of deliberation and punctiliousness, which has indeed almost the effect of want of spirit. Prolonged pauses are fatal to light dialogue ; repartees fall flat when over-much time is occupied in their delivery ; and the slightness of the theme becomes too evident when it is thus subjected to pressure

and tension. As *Mrs. Woffington*, Mrs. Bancroft plays like a genuine artist, with keen appreciation of the humorous, and with subtle suggestions of pathos. Perhaps the lady's most successful scenes are those relating to *Peg's* rather unaccountable affection for *Ernest Vane*; for it is throughout strange to the spectators that so weak a gentleman should stir such strong emotions in the bosoms of both *Mabel Vane* and *Peg Woffington*. It does not lie within Mrs. Bancroft's means to depict the *Mrs. Woffington* of fact—a vehement and versatile performer, skilled alike in tragedy and comedy, and obtaining equal applause as *Lady Macbeth*, as *Sir Harry Wildair*, or as *Lady Betty Modish*; physical qualities are wanting, and it becomes necessary to substitute a dainty sportiveness for reckless high spirits. In truth, it is rather a refined Nell Gwynne than an audacious Woffington that is presented at the Prince of Wales's Theatre; but the impersonation is remarkable nevertheless for its winsomeness and ingenuity. The character of *Mabel Vane* has never been so happily sustained as by Miss Ellen Terry, whose natural impulsiveness and intensely sympathetic voice and manner move the audience deeply, and secure very hearty and well-deserved applause. As *Triplet*, Mr. Bancroft presents a quaint figure, and succeeds in moving a measure of commiseration; but the poor poet does not seem very real or credible; his humour has departed, and he is deficient in the buoyant hopefulness which should be his sustaining characteristic amid all his humility and misfortune. The actor's shortcomings, however, are not ascribable to any lack of painstaking or intelligence. Mr. Archer invests *Ernest Vane* with far too severe and reflective an aspect and demeanour; Mr. Coghlan is a thoroughly competent *Sir Charles Pomander*.

XCVI.

"TOTTLE'S."

[Gaiety Theatre.—December 1875.]

MR. TOOLE enjoys a very special position upon the stage. He is the last of the low comedians of the Wright and Liston pattern. It may cost him rather more effort to entertain; but altogether his success is by no means inferior to theirs, while his method of art is assuredly of a cleaner and more wholesome kind. He is possessed of all the traditions of stage humour, the tricks of glance, gesture, and intonation, the expedients of caricature, which have, time out of mind, won laughter from playgoers; still it is further to be said of him that he owns much original drollery, with natural buoyancy of spirits, and a certain surprising energy of grotesqueness altogether peculiar to himself. Long since he established with his audiences that hearty understanding which is so particularly valuable to the comic actor, which binds them to him as by an electrical chain; he has their mirth thoroughly at command; a sort of jocose atmosphere seems to surround him; the very sound of his voice stirs memories and suggestions of merriment; while his presence on the scene excites the most boisterous applause. Of a performer thus prosperously circumstanced, new essays in art are hardly to be expected. His sway over his public may appear to be supreme; but he is in truth their bondman: they demand at his hands, not novelty, but repetition, or at best old things thinly disguised, and calling themselves new. Hazlitt was apt to complain of Jones the light comedian that he was "always the same Mr. Jones who shows his teeth and rolls his eyes;" and possibly a kindred charge might be brought against Mr. Toole. But it must be borne in mind that he is precisely what his audience would have him be, and what they have helped to make him. When it is announced, therefore, that Mr. Toole is to undertake a new part in a new play, a fervent hope prevails among his patrons that he is not going to be very different from what he has always been,

and that the entertainment may prove to be, after all, of the familiar sort. In the case of a popular low comedian, playgoers are much opposed to innovation, are very thorough-going Conservatives.

Mr. Byron has appreciated this view of the case. He has on former occasions provided characters for Mr. Toole, and has always been careful that these shall wear a certain family resemblance—shall be distinguished by the same “trick of face.” Contriving the drama of “Tottle’s” for Mr. Toole and the Gaiety Theatre, the playwright has taken for granted that freshness of subject or any particular regard for nature or probability was not required of him. A tradesman retired from business, unlettered but rich, aspiring to a life of gentility, but much encumbered by the manners of the shop, a Cockney accent, the mistakes in speech of Mrs. Malaprop, and a habit of humorous reference to his old occupation, is a stereotyped vehicle of comicality in plays of this class. *Mr. Tottle*, the hero of the story, is described as “late of Tottle’s refreshment-rooms; Tottle’s eating-house, Bucklersbury; and Tottle’s à la mode-beef shop, Borough Road;” and is, in truth, but a reproduction of *Mr. Middlewick*, the famous butterman of “Our Boys.” *Tottle*, the man of fortune, bears himself as a tavern-waiter, and his talk is of the cheap eating-house. He is a widower with one son, *Horace*, upon whose education he has expended large sums. Visiting a fashionable watering-place, *Tottle* has been greatly exercised by the fascinations of *Miss Julia Lilford*, an adventuress of surpassing beauty; at the same time he is provided with an opportunity of marrying his cousin, *Kate Trenchard*, a lady of decidedly mature years; for she had been *Tottle’s* first love quite in his schoolboy days, when, indeed, they were both children together. The elderly and rather dowdy *Kate* can by no means afford comparison with the beauteous *Julia*, whose costumes are most luxuriously fashionable, and the choice of *Tottle* is soon made. Of course much unhappiness results from his marriage with *Miss Lilford*. For to do Mr. Byron justice, he has tried hard to import seriousness of interest into his comic drama. We are even allowed to witness very unseemly and even painful scenes between the newly-married. *Tottle* grows more and more

coarse and morose and violent, although not without sufficient provocation. For *Mrs. Tottle* is cold and heartless, insolent, and, in the end, faithless. After fierce upbraiding and defiance of her husband, she openly elopes with an old lover, *Captain Raffler*, a blackleg and bully of the worst description. It becomes necessary indeed to resort to the Divorce Court to readjust the position of *Tottle*, and to enable him at last to find a third wife in his boy-love, the matronly-looking *Miss Trenchard*. It must be said that these grave events are of a depressing and repellent quality; the first two acts of "*Tottle's*," indeed, are certainly dull, and but for the relief afforded by the closing scenes, disappointment and disaster might have attended the representation. It was probably with a feeling of increased comfort that Mr. Byron himself turned from the discordant portions of his work to the complete harmony of its comical conclusion. For the third act is replete with facetious antics, practical jokes, and pantomimic excesses. All regard for the restrictions of comedy is now wholly abandoned; the characters are exhibited revelling in the wildest of farces. A wedding-breakfast is presented upon the stage. *Horace Tottle* has become the husband of *Mary*, the niece of a worthy old gentleman named *Cobham Brown*. But *Tottle* the elder, arriving suddenly from abroad, is led to believe, upon very insufficient grounds, that a marriage has been solemnised between his early love, *Miss Trenchard*, and this same *Mr. Brown*. The jealousy and indignation of *Tottle* betray him into a frenzy. He disguises himself as a waiter, and comports himself in the most eccentric manner. He joins in the conversation; he interrupts the speeches; he breaks the china; he upsets the choicer dishes; he grossly insults the company; but, given Mr. Toole in such a situation, the consequences are easily to be imagined. The fun is of a very obvious and artless kind; but of course the audience can only give way to the most unhesitating mirth. And Mr. Toole, in his extra-large Berlin gloves, his misfitting clothes, strange wig, and false whiskers—a waiter moved by strong emotions to extravagant attitudes, passionate speeches, and a complete overturning of all the conventionalisms and proprieties of the art of waiting at table—will probably be long called

upon to appear before the playgoing public. Indeed, a more thoroughly ludicrous figure has not for some time been seen upon the stage.

"Tottle's" is written in Mr. Byron's usual way. The play is plentifully supplied with pleasantry, the author welcoming all jests alike to his net, appropriating and creating by turns, fully persuaded the while that he is but catering for a public prone to be pleased with rattles and tickled with straws. Such a play could scarcely exist but for Mr. Toole; on the other hand, it is for Mr. Toole's sake that works of the "Tottle's" class are called into being. The actor, according to his wont, spares no exertion to please, and fairly earns the loud applause bestowed upon him. His *Mr. Tottle* will probably be classed among his most extravagantly comic impersonations. In other respects the play is well represented. Miss Farren is especially to be commended for the good taste and discretion she displays in the part of *Horace Tottle*. The difficult scene in which *Horace* reproaches his stepmother for her treachery is very skilfully dealt with; an unexpected note of pathos here and there deserving marked recognition. Miss Farren has not hitherto presented so artistic an example of stage portraiture. Mr. Clifford Cooper, who is new to the Gaiety, is a satisfactory *Cobham Brown*; and the little part of *Mary Brown* is pleasantly filled by Mdle. Camille—once famous in Paris as the original representative of Fanfan Bénéton, but now, strange to say, with scarcely a trace of foreign accent, taking rank upon the English stage as a picturesque and interesting *ingénue*.

XCVII.

"ANNE BOLEYN."

[Haymarket Theatre.—February 1876.]

THOSE playgoers who admired or enjoyed Mr. Tom Taylor's historical plays of "Twixt Axe and Crown" and "Joan of Arc" will probably be well content with his new tragedy of "Anne Boleyn." Mr. Taylor, it need hardly be said, is a

lettered and cultivated writer, who for some thirty years has been an active purveyor of theatrical entertainments of various kinds, from pantomimes up to, or down to, poetic dramas. His plays are not likely, therefore, to be dull from lack of literary capacity, or faulty owing to limited experience or want of practice on the part of their author; but at the same time they must not be searched for evidence of an urgent and exalted imagination impelling their creation; they are too obviously contrived to meet the requirements of *this* theatre or the desires of *that* performer; and, if we may say so without offence, they are much rather the work of a man of business than of a man of genius. "Anne Boleyn" follows the scheme of "Joan of Arc" and "Twixt Axe and Crown," and purports to relate history in blank verse. Little recourse has been had to invention; no fictitious personages are permitted to occupy the scene; history is not employed after the manner of Scott in his novels, and Dumas and Victor Hugo in their dramas, as an impressive background to a story of romance; "Anne Boleyn" is indeed a dramatic version of the text-books. Mr. Taylor is nothing if not strictly historical; he can give chapter and verse for his every incident; and his characters, costumed with every regard for accuracy, converse at great length certainly, but always in carefully prepared speeches imitative of the phraseology of the past. One of Mr. Disraeli's characters, on a special occasion, speaks of the necessity of "rubbing up his Goldsmith." There has been much "rubbing up of Goldsmith" in preparing "Anne Boleyn" for representation, with frequent reference to later chroniclers, including, it seems, Mr. Hepworth Dixon, whose historical writings, by the way, possess a certain flavour of Fitzball well commending them to melodramatic use. Mr. Taylor crowds his stage with celebrated characters, and supplies local and historical colour so profusely that all sense of outline and proportion is oftentimes lost to the canvas; in his anxiety to be faithful to fact he presses into his service numberless bits and scraps relating to the period dealt with, until his play becomes something of a mosaic of small historic matters. No doubt, what the work is, that the author designed it to be; and he may deem such an explanation a sufficient answer to all objec-

tion upon the subject. But, in truth, dramatic art has little more concern in compositions of the "Anne Boleyn" class than in the arrangement of the figures in Madame Tussaud's Exhibition; the waxen effigies having, we may note, the advantage of closer resemblance to their originals and scarcely less vitality than are enjoyed by Mr. Taylor's characters. If Shakspearian example be pleaded, the conclusive replication is too manifest to need setting forth. But even in form these productions of Mr. Taylor are not very like the histories of Shakspeare; they correspond far more closely to the dramas concocted from time to time by Signor Giacometti for Madame Ristori, and expounding the story now of Queen Elizabeth and now of Marie Antoinette. They are carefully and closely packed with historic persons and events; they are heedful of fact and tradition; they rarely deviate into novelty or originality; they are desperately prolix, of most distressing length; and they are expressly planned to suit the peculiarities, or it may be to gratify the vanity, of an individual performer, for whose sake all parts but one are more or less deprived of effect and reduced to insignificance. Although not a salient or a very undeserving example of works of the class, "Anne Boleyn" is assuredly what actors commonly style a "one-part" play. In representation it proves to be uninteresting, or, more candidly, it may be said to be dispiriting and fatiguing in no ordinary degree.

With professions of reverence for historical study, and with an eye also, as we may assume, to the exigencies of his leading actress, Mr. Taylor portrays *Anne Boleyn* as a paragon of virtue, whose excellence is heightened by contrast with her rival, *Jane Seymour*, represented as mock-modest, cunning, and designing—in fact, as a mere minx. Each act of the play has its separate title, as *Wooded*, *Won*, *Wed*, *Wronged*, and—alliteration failing at last—*Doomed*. *Anne* is depicted as an affectionate daughter, a faithful and loving wife, a fond mother. She is fully endowed, indeed, with the many good qualities that usually find enumeration upon tombstones. Her marriage with the king is shown to be a union of the purest affection, *Catherine of Arragon* being denied representation upon the scene, lest the spectators' sympathy with the loves of *Henry*

and *Anne* should suffer abatement. The earlier acts show forth, tediously enough, the life of *Anne* as a maid of honour. She gives up her lover, *Percy*, after affectionately embracing him, and flies to Mechlin to avoid a project of marriage with *James Butler*. She dances a ronde to music of the period with other ladies and gentlemen in waiting upon royalty, and listens while *Sir Thomas Wyatt* sings a song of his own writing to music composed by Mrs. Tom Taylor. After a lapse of seven years *Anne* is seen to be an invalid in white brocaded silk at Hever Castle. She is consumed, apparently, by a passion for the king, and has provoked much hopeless love in the bosoms of *Wyatt* and *Mark Smeaton*, a musician of the king's chamber. *Percy* appears no more. As queen, *Anne* distinguishes herself by her abuse of the Pope, and by the kind patronage and applause she bestows upon the New Testament. Discovering certain love-passages between the *King* and *Jane Seymour*, *Anne* treats that young lady with exceeding violence: tearing from her a miniature of the *King*, threatening to shoot her with bow and arrow, and indeed going near to strangling her. The last act is passed in the Tower, and is remarkable for its prolonged dolefulness. *Anne* has been condemned to death. *Cranmer* preaches, sympathises, and consoles. The sorrows of the *Earl of Wiltshire*, the queen's father, are abundantly exhibited. *Henry Norris*, *Francis Weston*, *William Brereton*, and *George Boleyn* deliver last dying speeches on their road to the scaffold. The fall of the curtain is delayed to the latest moment possible; and indeed great need exists for *Anne's* borrowing from Charles II., and apologising with him for being such an unconscionable time dying. The play occupies four hours in representation; nevertheless the management has the heartlessness to print in the programmes a request that 'the audience will kindly remain seated until the curtain falls!'

Miss Neilson, who plays *Anne Boleyn*, is by no means a great or a very accomplished actress, and her art has not gained in refinement or discipline by her absence from the London stage. She is skilled, however, in a certain routine of theatrical artifice, and can duly accomplish the smiles and frowns, the stares and starts, the tricks of gesture and

attitude, which are the main constituents of popular acting. Over pathos she has but limited command, and she cannot enable the spectator ever to forget that she is acting, and acting after a very conventional fashion. But she is stirring and forcible at times, is unsparing of physical exertion, and clearly takes the greatest pains possible with the characters assigned to her for representation. It must be no light or enviable task to commit to memory the long scenes Mr. Taylor has written for *Anne Boleyn*; yet Miss Neilson is complete mistress of her text, and out of her abundant knowledge is even able to assist certain of her playfellows when distressed by lapse of memory. The most artistic acting in "*Anne Boleyn*" is contributed by Mr. Arthur Cecil, who contrives to impart distinction and humour to the subordinate character of *Eustace Chapuis*, envoy from the Emperor Charles V., a conspirator against the *Queen* and mainly instrumental in producing her downfall. And praise is also due to Mr. Harold Kyrle, a new actor, who plays *Percy*, and by dint of good looks, alert bearing, a resonant sympathetic voice, and a distinct delivery, impresses the audience very favourably. Mr. Kyrle should be able presently to take a foremost place among the representatives of the young gentlemen of the drama. Mr. Howe personates the *Duke of Norfolk* after a sound and sensible fashion, and Miss Carlisle is a competent *Jane Seymour*. The *Cranmer* was a little too comical in the unctuous piety of his oratory; and the *King* might have stepped out of a pantomime, he was so exuberant of action and grotesque of air.

XCVIII.

"OTHELLO."

[Lyceum Theatre.—February 1876.]

MR. IRVING'S *Othello* has been enthusiastically applauded and as sharply condemned. There has never, we may note, been perfect unanimity in regard to the achievements of the actor; but on the present occasion the party of

dissent has gained strength, and ventured upon more distinct assertion of its opinions. Something of this may probably be due to the fact that *Othello* is Mr. Irving's third Shakspearian assumption. His histrionic system has become a more familiar matter than it was two seasons ago, and thus defects of style that escaped remark, if they did not win favour in his *Hamlet*, now incur grave rebuke. The personal peculiarities and shortcomings of an actor of any force are speedily forgiven him. The playgoers of the past soon learned to forget the low stature of Garrick and the "foggy throat" of John Kemble. It is understood now that every delineation presented by Mr. Irving must suffer in some degree from the irremediable physical characteristics of the actor. But it has, perhaps, been insufficiently taken into account that there exist strong preconceptions concerning the character of *Othello* which almost attach exceptional conditions to its representation upon the stage, and that what are known as Mr. Irving's "mannerisms," in this regard, acquire a curious prominence, and place him at an unforeseen disadvantage. In effect, *Othello* has long enjoyed popular admiration for the very qualities that Mr. Irving is least enabled to impart to his stage portraitures. This should, perhaps, have withheld the actor from the part; but it should not induce unmindfulness of much that is worthy and distinguished in his performance; for the "mannerisms" notwithstanding—and the many blemishes of a far more serious kind—there remain passages of Mr. Irving's *Othello* marked by rare artistic beauty, and meriting cordial recognition.

It is not only nature and continued habit of manner that separate his *Othello* from previous *Othellos*. The costume is different, for one thing. *Othello* has usually worn robes of an Oriental texture and device; but Mr. Irving will none of these. His *Othello* follows the counsel given years ago by Mr. Disraeli in "Vivian Grey," and appears "in the full dress of a Venetian magnifico of the Middle Ages; a fit companion for Cornaro, or Grimani, or Barberigo, or Foscari." No loss of picturesqueness is thus incurred, however. The absence of *Othello's* wonted dignity and repose of bearing is far more seriously felt. In the first two acts Mr. Irving is feverish and sensitive, but does not

aim apparently at making any great impression. "Keep up your bright swords" is spoken petulantly; the address to the Senate is delivered with considerable art, although an air of almost tearful sentiment attends the description of the wooing of *Desdemona*. *Othello* is without chivalric bearing; he becomes curiously effeminate in the presence of his bride; there is evidence of moral weakness in his obsequious uxoriousness. "Silence that dreadful bell" is properly spoken as a command, and without undue display of wrath. The dismissal of *Cassio* is well delivered. But it is not until the third act that there is either pronounced failure or consummate success in the performance. Mr. Irving's play of face and skilful application of tone when jealousy first stirs in the mind of *Othello* are very admirable; for although Coleridge and others have maintained that the passion of *Othello* is not jealousy, but that his suffering arises from "the dire necessity of loving without limit one whom his heart pronounces to be unworthy of that love," it is clear that at the outset the *Moor* is troubled by the most ignoble and degrading suspicions. Mr. Irving discriminates finely between *Othello's* consideration of feminine frailty as an abstract if painful proposition, and his gradual perception that *Iago's* hints apply to *Desdemona*, and that the wreck of his happiness is imminent. But the mine of passion is sprung too soon and too suddenly, and there is absolute waste of force in the wild utterance of the lines beginning, "I had rather be a toad." After this the merits and demerits of the representation become scarcely divisible. We may note, however, the delicate plaintiveness of "No, not much moved;" the acute and distressing air of shame which marks the delivery of the direction, "Set on your wife to observe;" the sense of mystery conveyed by the description of the handkerchief; and the declamatory force of the passage, "Like to the Pontic sea," &c. The "Farewell" necessarily lacked music of voice; and other speeches suffered severely from the impetuosity of the speaker. One of Hazlitt's descriptions of Kean is indeed peculiarly applicable to Mr. Irving: "He is too often in the highest key of passion, too uniformly on the verge of extravagance, too constantly on the rack." He wearies the eye with his incessant changes of posture, his

excessive and graceless movements of head and hands; while he offends the ear by too frequently permitting the fervour of his speech to degenerate into unintelligible and inarticulate rant. Yet it is fair to state that there are redeeming touches even in his worst and coarsest painting; that there are grand moments even in the very uncouthness and grotesqueness of his frenzy, and that the sense of an aberrant and diseased brain accompanied by exceeding physical prostration after the epileptic seizure of the fourth act, is conveyed with great artistic force and singular regard for natural truth. The fifth act is weirdly pathetic and impressive, without recourse to melodramatic terrors or literal interpretation of the stage directions. Mr. Irving's acting here abounds in emotion and passion, with grateful intervals of desperate calm, as when *Othello* stands petrified and aghast at his own most miserable folly and crime, resembling, it must be confessed, as he folds round him his robe, one of the late Mr. Fenimore Cooper's Mohawk braves draped in his blanket. The death scene avoids the conceits of Signor Salvini and Mr. Fechter, and is well contrived: *Othello* stabs himself, falls, drags himself beside the bed of *Desdemona*, and there sinks dead.

As a first essay, the performance is certainly remarkable, but, as we have shown, its imperfections and infirmities are many and grave. Certain of these, no doubt, Mr. Irving has power to amend, and his *Othello* will probably mellow and sober under the wholesome influences of time and experience. But there will always remain defects and blemishes inseparable from the actor which in this character the public may find it very difficult altogether to forgive and forget. The tragedy has been liberally and tastefully provided for by the management; the scenery, costumes, and stage-fittings leave very little to be desired. Nor has there been lack of ability generally on the part of the Lyceum company. Miss Isabel Bateman is, to be sure, but a feeble *Desdemona*, with a demeanour that is throughout monotonously and laboriously despondent; and Mr. Carton fails to invest *Roderigo* with much humour or individuality. But the *Cassio* of Mr. Brooke is well deserving of commendation for its intelligence and spirit; Miss Bateman is an able and vigorous *Emilia*, although

her vehemence in the fourth act exceeds the requirements of the situation ; and Mr. Forrester plays *Iago* with special skill and with the ease of a soundly practised actor. The suggestion of the full measure of intellectual force which *Iago* must surely have possessed may perhaps be lacking ; but there are many actors of far greater pretence who have fallen very short of the distinction achieved by Mr. Forrester in this character.

XCIX.

“QUEEN MARY.”

[Lyceum Theatre.—April 1876.]

UPON the stage the Laureate's “Queen Mary” is probably assured of the sort of success that comes of curiosity and of the respect legitimately due to a great writer ; and so far the objects of the Lyceum management in presenting the work may be substantially served ; but that an enduring addition has been made to the dramatic repertory of the country is not to be believed. Nor should it be charged against the spectators that they remained almost unmoved by the representation of Mr. Tennyson's tragedy, or betrayed lack of power to appreciate the merits of the production submitted to their judgment. As a theatrical exhibition “Queen Mary” fails, owing to its deficiency in dramatic quality. It can hardly have been devised originally with the most remote view to representation upon the stage. Its form is so far dramatic that it resembles in many respects the “histories” of the Elizabethan stage ; but it is to be noted that these precedents are almost obsolete, and that even the “histories” of Shakspeare are scarcely now to be reckoned among acting plays. More is needed than dialogue to constitute a drama ; the audience have to be entertained and excited by action not less than by speech. The stage is to be occupied not merely by orators, but by accompanying events and movements, which are in truth the living part of the drama. As Jeffrey observed upon

Byron's "Sardanapalus," "If an author does not write in the ideal presence of an eager and diversified assemblage, he may be a poet perhaps, but assuredly he will never be a dramatist. If Lord Byron has no hankering after stage-effect—if he is not haunted with the visible presentment of the persons he has created—if in setting down a vehement invective he does not fancy the tone in which Mr. Kean would deliver it, and anticipate the long applauses of the pit, then he may be sure that neither his feelings nor his genius are in unison with the stage at all." Can any one credit that in writing "Queen Mary" Mr. Tennyson dreamed for a moment of rousing the pit, or considered in the slightest degree the delivery of Miss Bateman or the tones and attitudes of Mr. Irving?

But sufficient proof that "Queen Mary" was not in the first instance designed for the theatre is to be found in the violence done to the work in suiting it, after a fashion, to the purposes of representation. The changes made would be called rude and ruthless indeed had they been perpetrated by other than the hands of the author himself. Abbreviation, at all costs, seems to have been the main consideration. And certainly the acting version of "Queen Mary" does not fatigue by reason of its length: its oppressive influences must be ascribed to other causes. There has been extraordinary destruction of the scenes; the *dramatis personæ* have undergone something like a massacre. "Did these bones cost no more the breeding but to play at loggats with them? Mine ache to think on't," says *Hamlet*. Mr. Tennyson has made havoc of inventions and creations that must have caused him infinite thought and painstaking. Of twenty-three scenes there remain only nine; some twenty characters only survive of the original forty-five. *Cardinal Pole* and *Archbishop Cranmer*, *Peter Martyr* and *Father Cole*, *Bishop Bonner* and *Father Bourne*, *Lord Williams of Thame*, *Sir Ralph Bagenhall*, *Sir Thomas Stafford*, the *Duke of Alva*, and *Sir Thomas Wyatt*, all are banished from the stage. With *Lord Howard* are incorporated the characters of *Sir Nicholas Heath* and *Sir Robert Southwell*. Among the suppressed scenes and incidents are the procession of *Mary* and *Elizabeth* through Aldgate; the flight of *Peter Martyr* after his interview with *Cranmer*;

the preaching of *Father Bourne* at Paul's Cross ; the insurrection of *Wyatt* ; the passing of the *King* and *Queen* through Gracechurch Street ; the meeting of Parliament in Whitehall ; all the passages relating to the fate of *Cranmer*, with the exception of the conversation between the old country wives *Joan* and *Tib* ; and *Lady Magdalen's* narrative of the insults offered her by *Philip*. The two scenes relating to the illness and death of the *Queen* are played without interruption, and in consequence rather tax, by their sameness and prolixity, the powers of endurance of the audience. Of new lines there are but few. The royal sisters meet, however, at the close of the play, and after their interchange of forgiveness and expressions of conciliation *Mary* expires in the arms of *Elizabeth*, and *Philip* is permitted an interpolation touching the conduct of the English admiral who had fired upon the Spanish ships, and compelled them to lower their topsails as a mark of deference to the English navy in the narrow seas. Room is thus found for an expression of clap-trap sentiment of the "Rule Britannia" order, to which Mr. Tennyson should hardly have condescended.

It will be seen that much of the stir and action distinguishing the original has been eliminated from the stage edition of the work. "Queen Mary" has been wrecked indeed, and its least dramatic constituents are among the salvage. The scenes of the Gatehouse of Westminster and of Guildhall under the mayoralty of *Sir Thomas White* are preserved ; otherwise there is scarcely any reference to the rising of *Wyatt*. The *Queen* receives the messengers arriving in quick succession with tidings of the conflict, and something of the manner of Shakspeare's battle scenes is here attempted. But the excision of *Wyatt* and his followers deprives these passages of their proper effect ; the *Queen* seems fighting the air, and her repetitive directions, "To the Tower with him !" "To the Tower with *him* !" "To the Tower with *her* !" prompt recollections of that earlier laureate who adapted Shakspeare's "Richard the Third" to theatrical representation. At the Lyceum the spectators see too much of *Queen Mary* and too little of the other characters. One is reminded of the announcement of Catalani's husband : "Ma femme et quatre ou

cinq poupées, voilà tout ce qu'il faut." And yet it has not been found practicable to express every characteristic of the *Queen* to be found in the poem. In truth, the most important of these—her passionate yearning for offspring—can only be distantly alluded to upon the stage; and the grand speech in the third act, "He hath awaked! he hath awaked! He stirs within the darkness!" is wholly sacrificed. The drama consists therefore simply of *Mary's* overweening love for her husband and his disdain of the gift she has bestowed upon him. But *Philip* is only a subordinate character; he appears in but two scenes, that are curiously alike: in each he is required to rebuff the *Queen's* fondness and to express his resolve to quit England. Almost the entire weight of the drama therefore devolves upon a heroine who cannot command the sympathies of a theatrical audience, or move them to interest in her proceedings. Practically *Mary* wearies the spectators not less than she wearies her husband, while his indifference to her seems throughout far more reasonable and intelligible than her devotion to him. It is possible that in the hands of such an actress as Ristori the character of *Mary* might lose much of its ungratefulness, might even be made impressive and affecting in no slight degree. But the art of Miss Bateman has strict limitations. Her voice is hollow, her delivery is monotonous, her manner is conventional; her histrionic method altogether is wanting in variety and in light and shade. She is forcible enough, but she is capable rather of the noise that startles than of the passion that electrifies. The exertions of which she is unsparing carry no sense of conviction to her auditors; they remain almost untouched by a performance that is, in truth, void of inspiration, is lit by no spark of true genius. Let it be said, however, that the actress displays unceasing energy, that she is manifestly most anxious to accomplish the arduous task she has undertaken, and that a note or two of genuine pathos in the last scene greatly relieve its monotony and oppressiveness. Miss Bateman is probably herself much and deeply moved by the character she impersonates; but she is unable to affect her audience in an equal measure. According to Horatian counsel, the actor who would draw tears must first shed them; nevertheless, the player may

weep bitterly and yet leave the spectators with dry eyes. As *Philip*, Mr. Irving secures an easy victory; nothing indeed could be better than his performance of this character. He has carefully copied the traditional appearance of the King, and conveys very adroitly his airs of frigid arrogance, heartless cruelty, and intense selfishness; the fanaticism and gross superstition which were also characteristic of *Philip* the author has not required the actor to demonstrate. Mr. Irving's happiest effort was perhaps contained in his scene with *De Fera*, where *Philip* hints at the prospect of the *Queen's* death, at the possibilities of his union with *Elizabeth*, and, while toying with his poniard, suggests the punishment of his agent if he be not secret in the matter. Noting Mr. Irving's self-control and repose in his personation of *Philip*, one could not but deplore the lack of these qualities in certain of his more ambitious essays. Of the manner in which the other characters were sustained nothing need be said, unless it be that Mr. Brooke is very respectable as *Simon Renard*, and that Miss Virginia Francis is rather insipid as *Elizabeth*. The songs are retained: an unfortunate circumstance, for they are intrusted to miserably incompetent vocalists.

C.

"MISS GWILT."

[Globe Theatre.—April 1876.]

MR. WILKIE COLLINS's new drama of "Miss Gwilt" is derived from his novel of "Armada," first published in the "Cornhill Magazine" some fourteen years ago. The skill displayed by the author on former occasions when he has converted his stories into plays has not failed him in the present instance, albeit the difficulties encountered are such as might well have deterred and disheartened an adapter of ordinary constitution; for "Armada" is a novel quite exceptional in regard to its elaborateness and complexity. Mr. Collins, however, has dealt with his production

after a wisely courageous and unceremonious fashion; he has suppressed very many of his characters, he has thinned the incidents, excised almost every redundant speech, and so pared down the plot that it is invested with a new aspect of simplicity and directness; the result is a drama which, whatever else it may lack, is certainly not deficient in the qualities which secure impressiveness and effect upon the stage. Once more, indeed, Mr. Collins has proved himself a dramatist not less than a novelist. The public may or may not approve "Miss Gwilt," and probably considerable objection will be raised to the uniform unwholesomeness of the subject and to the excess of physical horror distinguishing the final scenes; no playgoer, however, can witness the play without recognising its power to rivet attention and to absorb in the intensest way.

"Miss Gwilt" is in five acts, and "unity of place" is so far regarded that no change of scene occurs in any of the acts, although now and then the stage is divided to allow of the spectators viewing two interiors at once. The first act is mainly devoted to the introduction of the *dramatis personæ* to the audience, and is certainly a little dull, owing to its abundance of explanatory and narrative matter, indispensable, however, to the intelligibility of the intrigue. But when the author has obtained full command over the movements of his puppets, he does not permit them to dally. *Major Milroy* and his daughter are not made interesting, nor can it be said that they ever attain to much semblance of vitality; while *Armadale* is perhaps even more inane in the play than in the novel, the inferiority of his theatrical representative depriving him even of those personal graces of bearing and look with which he was supposed to be highly endowed. On the stage an air of the counter attends him, and his method of dress is suggestive of the creatures who are known at music-halls as *comiques*. The characters supporting the burden of the story are *Miss Gwilt*, *Dr. Downward*, *Midwinter*, and, in a lesser degree, *Captain Manuel*; and of these, the villanous doctor is perhaps the most prominent. The play sets forth his project for enriching himself by securing for his ward and accomplice the hand and fortune of *Allan Armadale*. His scheme fails; for it appears that *Allan Armadale* greatly prefers *Miss*

Milroy to *Miss Gwilt*; and that *Miss Gwilt* herself is inclined much less to *Armadale* than to his friend *Midwinter*. Then comes the discovery that *Midwinter's* real name is *Armadale*, that the friends are in truth cousins, and that each is not only an *Armadale*, but even an *Allan Armadale*. The doctor forthwith plans that *Miss Gwilt* shall marry *Midwinter*, and that he shall on the occasion of his marriage assume his proper name; that the two *Armadales* shall then be removed from the scene, when *Miss Gwilt*, armed with her marriage certificate, will be enabled to proclaim herself the widow, not of *Midwinter*, but of the rich *Allan Armadale*, and to secure therefore her share of the wealth he has left behind him; it being understood that *Dr. Downward* is to benefit considerably by any improvement in the fortunes of *Miss Gwilt*. *Midwinter* and *Miss Gwilt* become man and wife. They are passing their honeymoon at Naples, *Armadale* joining them in his yacht. A certain *Captain Manuel*, a degraded wretch, formerly an officer in the Brazilian navy, who has been an early lover of *Miss Gwilt*, and is well informed of the infamy of her career, has been employed by *Dr. Downward* to effect the destruction of *Armadale*. It occurs to *Manuel* to scuttle *Armadale's* yacht, and for some time belief prevails that both the *Armadales* have been in suchwise disposed of. But again the doctor's schemes undergo discomfiture, *Manuel* is drowned and the *Armadales* escape. The play concludes with the luring of *Armadale* to the doctor's sanatorium at Hendon, and with an exhibition of the attempt made to destroy him by poisoning the air of his bedroom. The drama now closely follows the novel, the curtain descending upon the suicide of *Miss Gwilt* and the apprehension of *Dr. Downward* by the police.

"Miss Gwilt" resembles one of those sombre but exciting dramas of the Boulevards in which crime and criminals figure considerably, and success is sought not so much by enlisting sympathy as by shocking sensibility and appealing to a love of the terrible. The supply of poisoned air is not confined to the last scene; the atmosphere throughout is oppressively miasmatic. With the exception of *Midwinter*, the leading characters seem expressly devised to stimulate objection, even to loathing. However, these are

the conditions of the novel, and they necessarily accompany the play, although the author has recognised the fact that transfer to the stage has a certain coarsening and heightening influence, and often converts the comparatively unpleasant into the positively insufferable. With this view he has qualified somewhat the odiousness of his heroine, perhaps to the sacrifice in a degree of the harmony and coherence of his original design. The *Miss Gwilt* of the play makes some claim to pity and forbearance: her past is now less guilty than it was; she expresses contrition for her offences, and her love for her husband is placed beyond question; at the same time, upon the demands of the story, her penitence yields to an extraordinary vindictiveness. She boldly denies her union with *Midwinter*, and she is most urgent for the death of the inoffensive *Armada*. *Manuel* is the conventional, unscrupulous, unredeemable ruffian of melodrama; the only marvel in his case is that he could ever have been the favoured lover of *Miss Gwilt*; and the fact casts a most unpleasant light upon the events of her early life. It is true that *Manuel* is supposed to have undergone many privations and sufferings, and to have fallen desperately from his former estate; but it is clear that his best must have been bad indeed. *Dr. Downward* is by no means a preferable miscreant; he is more oily and plausible of manner, and he rather prompts deeds of violence than accomplishes them with his own hands; but his wickedness is nevertheless of the most abandoned and atrocious kind. The dialogue pretends only to carry on the story after a matter-of-fact fashion, and is rarely chargeable with superfluity; it might be well, however, if *Captain Manuel's* jests upon his poverty and his pulmonary disorders were reconsidered, and if certain of *Dr. Downward's* more Pecksniffian utterances underwent retrenchment; laughter has a peculiarly jarring effect when it interrupts the critical scenes of serious drama. Altogether "*Miss Gwilt*" is likely to win the approval of those playgoers who affect entertainments of full flavour and high seasoning. It is, indeed, an acceptable work of its class, but its class is scarcely entitled to plenary admiration.

Miss Cavendish skilfully avails herself of every opportunity permitted by the dramatist. *Miss Gwilt's* hold upon

the compassion of the audience is very insecure, and the part is so far an ungrateful one. Yet the adventuress appears in many stirring scenes, and is intrusted with much histrionic duty of moment. Miss Cavendish plays throughout with sound judgment, and oftentimes exhibits genuine power. The later passages of the drama are rendered with an abandonment to the emotions of the scene such as the actress has rarely displayed on former occasions. Mr. Boyne, if he is scarcely the *Midwinter* of the novel, is not deficient in force and intelligence. The *Dr. Downward* of Mr. Cecil is an impersonation of surprising completeness. The actor's every word, look, and gesture assist the representation of the drama; while unexpected power is revealed in his dealing with the horrors of the last scene.

CI.

"CORINNE."

[Lyceum Theatre.—July 1872.]

THE representation of "Corinne," the new romantic drama by Mr. Robert Buchanan, suffers seriously from the conditions commonly attendant upon summer seasons under transient managements. It is clear that the actors have been hastily assembled, and that they are not of proved capacity; that the preparations have been hurried and the rehearsals inadequate. Nor are these deficiencies to be countervailed by the most liberal provision of scenic fittings and adornments. Perhaps success of a complete kind could not be expected for the work under any circumstances, its character and peculiarities being duly considered; but certainly many disappointments might have been spared by a more judicious system of stage management and the securing of players competent to figure in parts of importance. For "Corinne" is a drama of the French romantic school, depending much upon the action of well-drilled auxiliaries, upon the perfect rendering of the details of performance, upon the arts and devices of scene-painters,

property-masters, costumiers, and other functionaries contributing to theatrical effect and spectacle; while the leading characters of the play demand at the hands of their representatives a certain fervour and exaltation of manner and utterance far beyond the reach of our common players. The author deals with stirring events, which are supposed to occur at a most exciting period. The scene is laid in France, and the story is spread over some twelve years. In the earlier scenes the coming Revolution is but a small cloud upon the horizon; then the storm bursts, and an attempt is made to depict episodes of the Terror, until in the last act the Abbaye prison is shown, with the massacres that occurred at its gates during "the hundred hours." It may be questioned, however, whether Mr. Buchanan's method of treating the Revolution has not rather the effect of unduly limiting or diminishing its significance. Mr. Buchanan, surely founding his fiction upon fact, explains that even so late as 1792 religious prejudices were so strong in France that "members of the artistic professions were not merely denied the rites of burial, but were again and again refused the rites of marriage." By "members of the artistic professions" probably theatrical performers only are referred to; but this grievance, great as in itself it was, could have played but a small part in urging on the Revolution. After all, very few could have suffered by bigotry and persecution of this miserable sort, and the overturning of the state is not justly to be accounted for by the fact that players were liable to have their marriages annulled by the Church, and were not permitted interment in consecrated ground. Mr. Buchanan's heroine is an actress secretly married to *Victor de Beauvoir*, who afterwards becomes known as the *Comte de Calvador*. Presently *Corinne* and her husband are desirous to make public their union, and to renew their nuptial vows before the altar of Notre Dame de la Garde. But the relations of *Victor* interfere, and obtain important assistance from the *Abbé de Larose*, whose lawless love *Corinne* had formerly repulsed with scorn, and who is eager for revenge. Accordingly he induces the Archbishop of Paris not only to forbid the public marriage, but to proclaim the former clandestine union of the nobleman and the actress alto-

gether null and void, and to threaten the lovers with the wrath of the Church if they venture to act in contravention of his authority. *Victor* submits to this shameful decree, and quits *Corinne* at the altar, not again to encounter her until many years have elapsed. The youth's conduct is not heroic, but it is intelligible enough, and it is not especially blameworthy. Nevertheless *Victor* is very bitterly regarded both by *Corinne* and her brother *Raoul*, an artist who is occupied with the new ideas, and advocates revolutionary measures, mainly, however, because of personal reasons and out of private pique. He had loved a lady of title, the *Comtesse de la Vallée*, who had trifled with his affections and declined his suit. Thereupon he had vowed vengeance against the whole nobility of France. *Raoul* and the *Abbé* are therefore both vindictively inclined for like causes—the pangs they feel as despised lovers. *Corinne* and *Victor* meet at a fête given by the *Abbé* in the gardens of his chateau in the neighbourhood of Paris, and permit themselves awkward and monotonous misunderstandings. *Victor* believes *Corinne* to be the mistress of the *Abbé*; *Corinne* believes *Victor* to be the lover of the *Comtesse de la Vallée*. These mistakes are of an artificial kind; they are altogether independent of sound sense and adequate evidence. The revolutionary mob, headed by *Raoul*, arrives from Paris; *Corinne* attitudinises with a red flag, and consternation spreads among the guests of the *Abbé*. In the last act *Victor* is seen to be prisoned in the Abbaye, with *Raoul* for his jailor. *Raoul* is the very weakest of Jacobins. Upon the reappearance of his old love, the *Comtesse de la Vallée*, in the disguise of a peasant girl, he is tempted to betray the cause of the Revolution, and to aid in the escape of the aristocrats. The massacre of the prisoners then commences, the place of Stanislas Maillard, the mock judge of the Abbaye, being filled upon the stage by no less a personage than *Marat* himself, who had appeared in an earlier scene as the horse-leech of the *Comte d'Artois*. One of the earliest victims is the wicked *Abbé de Larose*, whose situation moves him to exhibit the most abject terror. By recourse to a not very likely expedient, the dramatist succeeds in sparing the life of *Victor*; and the curtain falls upon the death of *Corinne*.

the result of exhaustion and protracted suffering, both mental and physical.

It would be too much to say that "*Corinne*" is a satisfactory work. The writing is, for the most part, careful, sound, and vigorous, if the inclinations towards poetic diction and sentiment are only intermittent. There is real dramatic power in many of the situations, and the attention of the audience is rarely permitted to flag. But the fable is deficient in compactness, and, while possessing certain interesting qualities of its own, is not especially sympathetic. Mr. Buchanan does not marshal his incidents very adroitly; they assume at times something of a "clubbed" formation; nor does he succeed invariably in rendering them lifelike and credible. His characters are apt to wear a conventional air, and are but faintly outlined, as though drawn by a hand uncertain of its own intention; while their movements seem to be too often of a purposeless and inconsequential kind. *Marat*, for instance, should hardly have been introduced into the play, unless he could be intrusted with a more prominent share in the business of the scene; his presence is only a disturbing influence, for he absorbs attention and excites expectation, which, under the circumstances of the case, cannot be gratified. It is always desirable that great names should not be attached to small parts. In the present instance, although the representative of *Marat* plays discreetly and with conscientious forbearance, it is not to be supposed that the portraiture he presents is of an acceptable kind. A practised low comedian, Mr. Atkins is misemployed when he is thrust into such a part. And generally the author suffered because of the shortcomings of his interpreters. In the hands of an actress of any distinction, no doubt the character of *Corinne* might prove theatrically effective in a considerable degree; but Mrs. Fairfax has scarcely acquired the rudiments of her art. Mr. Forbes Robertson exhibits good intentions as the *Abbé de Larose*. As *Raoul*, Mr. Forrester is unable to find histrionic opportunities; but the ineffectiveness of the part is perhaps chargeable rather to the author than to the actor. As *Victor de Beauvoir* Mr. Warner is animated and emotional enough, displaying unexpected pathos in the prison scene.

CII.

"PERIL."

[Prince of Wales's Theatre.—October 1876.]

M. SARDOU'S "Nos Intimes," of which "Peril" is an adaptation, is a familiar work in this country. It was represented here in 1871 by a French company, which included Mdle. Fargueil, MM. Parade, Delannoy, and Brindeau; and already English versions of the comedy—called "Friends and Foes" and "Our Friends" respectively—had been produced at the St. James's and Olympic Theatres. For the Prince of Wales's Theatre "Nos Intimes" has been translated anew by authors calling themselves Messrs. Saville and Bolton Rowe, names that savour of harlequinade humour.

M. Sardou cannot boast the wit of M. Dumas, but then he is not burdened with those curious didactic ambitions which form a distracting element in the works of the author of "La Dame aux Camélias." M. Sardou is a humorist with a strong tendency towards caricature; he is bent upon diverting his audience at all costs. If, in such wise, his art suffers, so much the worse for his art. Of his comedies it may be said generally that they each contain a great variety of characters, many amusing incidents, one impressive situation, and a weak last act in which an incoherent story is brought to an unsatisfactory conclusion. He is certainly adroit in shifting his *dramatis personæ* hither and thither, so that while they crowd the stage they do not confuse the spectator; but they have often no distinct mission in the play, and seem to pertain rather to one of those "entertainments" in which eccentric figures are formally and successively introduced, but own no real relationship to each other. In "Nos Intimes" he has endeavoured to set forth the experiences of a man with many friends and the trouble they occasion him. He entertains them at his country-house, and they repay his hospitality with the grossest ingratitude. They malign and

insult him ; they find fault with his every proceeding ; they labour to make him wretched ; one of the party, indeed, seeks to seduce from him the affections of his young wife. He is convinced at last of the true nature of his guests, and rejoices greatly when his house is rid of them. The teaching of the story, so far as it may be supposed to teach anything, is to the cynical effect that friendship is a delusion, and that a man's bitterest foes are those with whom he seems most intimate, and to whom he has been unceasingly kind and generous. No doubt M. Sardou would disclaim any moral purpose whatever ; he presents a caricature for his audience to laugh at, and that duty done, there is an end of his thoughts and wishes on the subject. But the absence of sincerity on the part of the dramatist leads to lack of sympathy on the part of the spectators. They fail to interest themselves in events which the author has taken pains to invest with an unreal air. They are enabled to set their own practical experiences of life in opposition to his extravagant opinions, and the result tends to his discomfiture. The personages and occurrences of "*Nos Intimes*" are repellent to belief. It is perceived promptly that no such country gentleman as M. Sardou's hero ever existed—that such a strangely conducted country-house as his is inconceivable, and that the friends who plague him, if probable in any degree, are not probable as guests in the abode of a sane man. For it is to be noted that these despicable creatures do not claim kindred with their host, the tie of blood being usually accepted as a tolerable explanation of much rudeness of demeanour and speech ; they behave shamefully, because they call themselves and he calls them his friends, and for no other reason. But who has any pity to spare for a man with odious friends ? He is a fool both for making them and for not breaking with them.

At the Prince of Wales's Theatre the scene of "*Nos Intimes*" is transferred from France to England, and the *dramatis personæ* boast English names. But it is difficult to change the *venue* and the citizenship of French comedy and its characters. No pains have been spared, and indeed considerable ingenuity has been exercised in the matter ; but, at most, the play has been denationalised somewhat.

An artificial view of French life and manner and idiosyncrasy is hardly to be converted into an acceptable picture of English society. Throughout the play it is felt that the characters, the motives swaying them, the situations in which they appear, the relationship they bear to each other, the air they breathe, are not of Britannic nature. The masquerade may be clever enough and well sustained, but every domino hides a Frenchman. The hero no longer shoots a fox that preys upon his poultry, but a hare that nibbles his carnations. In one of Mr. Du Maurier's pleasant illustrations of nursery humours certain children are seen discussing the why and the wherefore of Adam and Eve's expulsion from Eden. "Perhaps they shot a fox," suggests little Jack, the squire's son. No such utterance could have proceeded from a French child. No social law makes vulpicide a crime in France. But the incident, even with its change of animals, fails in effect upon the English stage. The dramatist seems to be ridiculing the interest he had exerted himself to excite, and a consequent sense of injury afflicts the spectators; their regard has been obtained from them by false pretences. A husband with good reason to be jealous is supposed to be lying in wait to assassinate his wife's lover; in truth, he is only making extraordinary exertions to slaughter a hare that destroys his flowers! So trivial an explanation of conduct that seemed to be so serious is an affront to the lookers-on. But this is M. Sardou's way. The love scenes between *Lady Ormond* and *Captain Bradford* would seem to demand grave treatment at the hands of the dramatist. A friend is betraying his trust, a wife is perilling her honour, a home is about to be wrecked. Yet M. Sardou views the position as farcical and absurd. The lady is allowed to suppose that her lover suffers from heart disease; she is eager on that account to subdue his excitement; she believes that his protests will induce aneurism, that if he kneels at her feet he will expire there. The audience laugh, as they well may, for the scene is most amusing; but it makes havoc of the story. M. Sardou, however, is quite content to purchase incidental effect at the expense of general interest. In the same way the characters, laboriously introduced, labelled as it were with certain peculiarities or special infirmities, readily abandon

these after they have met with due recognition. *Sir Woodbine Grafton*, for instance, a querulous, selfish, East Indian Civil servant, with a disordered liver and a dreadful temper, completely loses his individuality as the play progresses. He is no longer to be distinguished from *Sir George Ormond's* other ill-conditioned friend, the lawyer *Mr. Crossley Beck*.

It must not be supposed, however, that "Peril" fails to entertain. In truth it pleases greatly, if rather as a farce than as a portrayal of fact, scarcely a dissentient voice interfering with the cordiality of its reception. It has been set upon the stage with a carefulness and a regard for detail only impeachable on the score of laboriousness and excess. The oak hall at Ormond Court, with its staircase, fireplace, bay-window, carvings, armour, and trophies of arms, is a triumph of scenic decoration. It is very picturesque, and, moreover, possesses that draughty look which often attends the interiors of ancient mansions. The luxurious boudoir of *Lady Ormond* is marked by an eccentric tastefulness that is probably secure of sympathy in these times. The decorations, however, suggest an ornithological craziness on the part of her Ladyship unaccounted for by anything in the comedy. The acting is throughout excellent. As an original portrait, the *Sir Woodbine Grafton* of Mr. Arthur Cecil deserves special mention, with an expression of regret that, owing to no fault of the actor's, the character declines in force as the play proceeds, and sinks at last into mere commonplace. Miss Robertson, if in the earlier scenes inclined to excess of artificial airs and graces, displays genuine power in the third act, when *Lady Ormond* repels the advances her indiscretion had justified. Mr. Bancroft is a satisfactory representative of the rather unsatisfactory character of *Sir George*. Mr. Charles Sugden appears commendably as *Captain Bradford*; and Mr. W. Younge, a very youthful actor, obtains deserved applause as *Percy Grafton*, *Sir Woodbine's* son, a precocious schoolboy, who reads *Boccaccio*, and suffers much from attempting to smoke a *Trichinopoly* cheroot. The peevish couple, *Mr. and Mrs. Crossley Beck*, are forcibly presented by Mr. Kemble and Mrs. Leigh Murray; and Mr. Kendal, wearing a wig of an

unnatural flaxen hue, plays with great spirit *Dr. Thornton*, a homœopathic physician who administers quite allopathic doses of good counsel to his patients. Miss Buckstone personates with grace and intelligence *Lucy Ormond*, *Sir George's* daughter, who ultimately becomes the wife of *Dr. Thornton*.

CIII

"RICHARD III."

[Lyceum Theatre.—February 1877.]

THE restoration to the stage of Shakspeare's "Richard III." reflects credit upon the Lyceum management.

"The only rule," writes Hazlitt, "for altering Shakspeare is to retrench certain passages which may be considered either superfluous or obsolete, but not to add or transpose anything." At the Lyceum no additions are made to the text, but the retrenchments are very considerable, while, chiefly in order to avoid too frequent shifting of the scenes, there occurs occasional transposition of the incidents. Here and there, too, may be noted a certain indefensible system of culling effective lines from the suppressed scenes to enrich the preserved portions of the play. Probably no two students of the poet could come to precise agreement as to the passages they would omit from his text. The method of condensation adopted at the Lyceum Theatre has certainly produced an effective acting drama, in the course of which no line is spoken which is not contained in Shakspeare's play. And the fact that the Lyceum company includes several very inefficient performers may be accepted as a sufficient reason for the excision of much matter which otherwise might well have been retained. If, for instance, we are to have a ranting *Duke of Clarence*, it seems but prudent to limit his opportunities of speech; and so, considering the monotonous violence of Miss Bateman's *Margaret of Anjou*, there is sound judgment manifested in the elimination of that vociferous character from the later acts of the tragedy. In truth,

the adequate representation of one of Shakspeare's histories demands the combination of more performers of the first class than can now be readily assembled in a London theatre.

The revival greatly interested the audience ; but it must be confessed that the assumption of a new and arduous part by Mr. Irving was generally viewed as a matter of still more importance. Of late there has been a measure of decline in the fervour of the reception awarded to Mr. Irving's performances of Shakspeare. It is, of course, difficult to maintain enthusiasm at its first fever-heat, and reaction is apt to follow upon emotional excesses. But if there has been any failure on the part of the actor, some fickleness should certainly be charged against his public. The ardent admirers of his *Hamlet* should certainly have shown themselves more content than they confessed themselves with both his *Macbeth* and his *Othello*, seeing that all three impersonations were closely united by similarity of intellectual view and histrionic method. But the charm of novelty perhaps made its absence seriously felt ; and frequent performance, nightly wear and tear, seemed to affect the tragedian injuriously, heightening the defects and extravagances of his manner of art. As *Richard*, however, it is likely that Mr. Irving may regain any favour he has forfeited, and even attach to himself a section of critical opinion that has held itself unsympathetically aloof from his Shakspearian efforts. Those confirmed habits or tricks of accent or pronunciation, of gesture, of gait, of facial expression, hitherto denounced as disfiguring "mannerisms," are not out of harmony with the individuality of *Richard* ; for *Richard* is very much of what actors call a "character part," and permits of the minute and special rendering of personal and physical traits and peculiarities. *Gloster* enters immediately upon the rising of the curtain ; there is no need to prepare the minds of the spectators in regard to him, for his character has been sufficiently exhibited and developed in the Second and Third Parts of "King Henry VI." Mr. Irving, looking very like *Louis XI.*, is content to represent the deformity of "hard-favoured" *Richard* by means merely of rounded shoulders and a halting walk. In the earlier scenes there is some want of repose and

repression. *Richard*, who has proclaimed, "I am myself alone," and avowed that he has "neither pity, love, nor fear," seems deficient in mental fortitude, in self-confidence and sufficiency. But the actor is assuredly to be excused for any nervousness that may have interfered with his intentions, or led to an unequal expenditure of his resources. At present his impersonation suffers from over-emphasis and excess of elaboration; and yet these defects are really merits, in so far as they indicate his devoted study of his text, his desire that no line or point of it should fail in effect through lack of zeal or painstaking on his part. The incredible scene of the wooing of *Lady Anne* is skilfully represented, and admirable art is displayed in *Gloster's* dealings with the kinsfolk of the *Queen* and in his encounter with *Margaret of Anjou*. It is to be noted that *Richard*, in right of the intensity and thoroughness of his villany, always commands the favour, admiration, and even a measure of the sympathy of his audience; they are carried away by his superb force of character; they perceive that the other *dramatis personæ* are but puppets in his hands, and that he is very fully possessed of the kingly attributes of sagacity, energy, indomitable courage, and signal power of command, the while he is endowed with an appreciation of humour that is even in advance of *Iago's* sense of jocosity. Mr. Irving capitably depicts *Richard's* enjoyment of his own villany, and of the mocks and jibes and insults he heaps upon friends and foes alike. Hypocrisy has always a comic leaven upon the stage, and *Richard's* powers of dissimulation, his ability to "wet his cheeks with artificial tears and frame his face to all occasions," his affectation of religion and piety—notably in the scene with the *Lord Mayor*—are represented with extraordinary fulness and force, and win very cordial applause. The rebuke of *Buckingham* is no longer delivered as a wild burst of passion, but, much more judiciously, is spoken with considerable calmness, and yet with a malignant, bitter, and menacing contempt that is extremely effective. Throughout the play, indeed, the desire of the actor appears to be to depict *Richard* not as the petulant, vapouring, capering, detonating creature he has so long been represented in the theatre, but as an arch and polished

dissembler, the grimmest of jesters, the most subtle and the most merciless of assassins and conspirators, aiming directly at the crown, and ridding himself one by one of every obstacle appearing on his path thitherward—"hewing his way out with a bloody axe," smiling and "murdering while he smiles"—and gifted or afflicted with a certain diabolical delight in his own enormities. At the same time it should be stated that the scenes really demanding passionate interpretation, such as the arrest and condemnation of *Hastings*, the bearing of *Richard* upon the interception of his march, and his treatment of the messengers bringing tidings of the successful advance of *Richmond*, were rendered with sufficient force. Exhaustion of voice and a rather hysterical display of remorse weakened the effect of the tent-scene. Here *Richard* seemed embarrassed with the velvet and ermined robes he had carried with him from Westminster to Bosworth Field, and too much disposed to make strange attitude and curious gesticulation serve as means of depicting anguish of mind and the pangs of a guilty conscience. The performance will without doubt gain by the further consideration the artist can now bring to his undertaking; experience will teach him to economise his forces, to reduce the inequalities of his portraiture, and to rid himself of the minor defects of redundant action and excessive play of face. But as it stands, this representation of Shakspeare's *Richard* may surely take its place among the most remarkable of histrionic achievements. As an actor's first impersonation of a part entirely new to him, it is startling in its originality, its power, and completeness.

CIV.

"ARTFUL CARDS."

[Gaiety Theatre.—February 1877.]

"ARTFUL CARDS" is the inelegant title of Mr. Burnand's "new farcical comedy," which owes its existence to the Palais Royal play of "*La Clé*," by MM. Duru and Labiche.

The hero of the story is a *Mr. Spicer Rumford*, a weak gentleman with a foolish fondness for dissipation, whose limited means, however, forbid much indulgence of his tastes in that respect. He is married to a rich wife; but *Mrs. Rumford* has absolute control of her fortune, holds the purse-strings very tightly, and allows him a rather paltry income. *Mr. Rumford* tries hard, by "cooking" his accounts and by carrying protestations, to extract further payments from his wife; but she is very suspicious of his good faith, and has indeed sufficient reason to distrust professions of love which are invariably accompanied by applications for money. The play sets forth the nocturnal misadventures of *Mr. Rumford* upon an occasion when he has eluded his wife's vigilance, and, professing to be engaged in important legal business, has really visited a beautiful Polish Countess at her lodgings in the neighbourhood of Leicester Square. The *Countess Asteriski* is an adventuress of a very bad class. She is in league with a gang of desperadoes, who, pretending to be foreign noblemen, keep a gaming-table, and victimise all they can lure to their board of green cloth. *Mr. Rumford* is easily induced to play, and is at first, to his great delight, permitted to win largely; but presently he finds himself a loser to a considerable amount. He is stripped, not only of all the money in his immediate possession, but also of his watch and chain, and is constrained to give his note of hand in acknowledgment of his further liabilities. The gambling-house is entered by the police, but detection is avoided by the sudden conversion of the roulette-table into a piano and the assumption of musical instruments by the gamblers, so that the constables have the air of interrupting a harmless concert. It is thought prudent, however, that the company should disperse; and soon *Mr. Rumford*, much flushed and confused from the effects of the Countess's champagne, finds himself in Piccadilly, wearing an Ulster coat that clearly belongs to a much taller man, and still carrying the trombone he had snatched up on the entry of the police into the gambling-house. He has no money to pay for a cab to his home in the Avenue Road, nor is he able to reward a friendly policeman, who relieves him of the inconvenient trombone.

But *Mr. Rumford's* distresses need not be related further in detail. He arrives home at last in a very soiled and troubled state, to submit to severe cross-examination at the hands of his wife; his answers and explanations being of the most hopelessly entangled and contradictory kind. However, *Mrs. Rumford* is not altogether blameless; it is shown that in her husband's absence she had attended an appointment with a foreigner in Kensington Gardens to pay a large sum of money in exchange for certain compromising letters. There ensues a sort of mutual hushing-up of the peccadilloes of both husband and wife; an amnesty is proclaimed, forgiveness is interchanged, and the play ends with *Mr. Rumford's* recovery, in some rather unintelligible way, of the money lost to the Countess and her confederates at the Leicester Square gambling-house.

"Artful Cards" is endowed with all the absurdities of farce, but it is not without the diverting qualities of that class of production. The story is indeed scarcely more reasonable or conceivable than the plot of a pantomime, and yet it is very successful in moving the spectators to laughter. The incidents are oftentimes in themselves exceedingly droll, and Mr. Burnand has enriched the dialogue of the original with an abundance of jests, of the odd, vivacious, good-humoured kind peculiar to himself. But no doubt the play is mainly indebted for the very favourable reception it met with to the popularity of Mr. Toole and to his extraordinary exertions in the part of *Spicer Rumford*. Mr. Toole, it need hardly be said, is a practised interpreter of farce, and is able to make the most of every comical opportunity; but there is always a sort of natural foundation for his exuberant humour; the growth may be luxuriant and eccentric, but the stock is of a simple and homely sort; and something recognisable as life-like and real is discernible even in the wildest of his freaks and frolics. In the first act little incident occurs; he has to appear only as a hen-pecked husband anxious to conciliate and extract money from his rich and rather acrid partner, while bent upon a night of lively entertainment with his nephew *Fred Flutter*. But in the second act, the scene representing the drawing-room of the *Countess Asteriski*, *Mr. Spicer*

Rumford is perceived to be a figure scarcely less ludicrous and grotesque than the waiter in the last act of "Tottle's." *Mr. Rumford* has hurriedly attired himself in a dress-suit that does not fit him; he has misgivings that are not without warrant as to the shape and position of his white tie; his shirt-studs have betrayed him and abandoned their proper posts—he suspects them of wriggling down into his dress-boots; he would conceal their defection by holding his hand upon his breast, but unfortunately his cheap kid gloves—of course very much too long in the fingers—have split in the most disastrous way, and through their rents his red knuckles are painfully revealed. But the reader can picture to himself *Mr. Toole's* struggles with these difficulties of dress and deportment, and can further imagine the comedian's appearance when he enters Piccadilly, with a broken hat and muddy boots, oppressed with a trombone, and wearing an Ulster coat of undue length. His interview with the policeman is the next absurdity, and then follows his furtive return home and his desperate attempts to convince his suspicious wife of the reasonableness of his extravagant conduct. These exploits secured the complete success of the representation.

CV.

"ROBERT MACAIRE."

[Gaiety Theatre.—February 1877.]

THE once-famous melodrama of "Robert Macaire" is now presented in a compressed form and with excision of its more startling incidents. There is "a time to sleep" for melodramas as for other things, and "Robert Macaire" is fast passing away to that crowded shelf from which plays are not taken down again. The success enjoyed by the production upon its first appearance some fifty years ago was not due to its own merits, but rather to the talent for gag and *blague* of its early representatives—mainly, indeed, to the remarkable force, humour, and histrionic genius of

Frédéric Lemaître. He was quick to perceive that the conventional cut-throat of the theatre, such as the dramatist had intended him to represent, was no longer secure of applause; was likely, indeed, to be received with censure; and thereupon he invented the extraordinary combination of jocosity and ruffianism, of grand airs and ragged garments, of burlesque and tragedy, which, in the person of *Robert Macaire*, came upon the stage as a new revelation. The traditions of Lemaître are so far respected at the Gaiety that *Robert* is dressed after the original fashion—he remains true to his tattered and patched red pantaloons, his fragmentary gloves, and his very long-tailed coat; he dances with his old agility, wields his bludgeon dexterously as of yore, and still takes snuff out of the circular box, whose squeaking lid always brings to the mind of *Jacques Strop* terrible suggestions of the creaking of the guillotine; but in truth the vitality of the play is almost extinct. "Robert Macaire" was last seen in London about ten years ago, when Mr. Fechter was tenant of the Lyceum Theatre; his *Robert*, however, was not one of his best efforts, and he obtained less applause than did Mr. Widdicombe, the *Jacques Strop* of the performance. At the Gaiety, Mr. Collette is vigorous and animated, although he is without the depth of tragic power which should underlie the levity of *Robert Macaire*, and impress the audience with a sense of his absoluteness and enormity as a malefactor. In the part of *Jacques Strop* Mr. Toole displays very singular grotesque force. It is understood that eccentricity of every kind is consistent with a proper representation of this character. Mr. Toole fully avails himself of the privilege thus permitted him—he is the personification of wild caricature; he revels in the utmost extravagance of speech, attitude, and gesture. At the same time in his portrayal of nervous agitation and convulsive panic there are touches of fantastic art within the reach of few living actors of comedy, or indeed of tragedy either. The favour now extended to "Robert Macaire" is entirely due to the surprising performance of the representative of *Jacques Strop*; otherwise the play only subsists as a curious relic of the past. That it will survive to any very distant date is hardly to be expected, nor indeed much to be desired.

CVI.

"THE VICARAGE."

[Prince of Wales's Theatre.—April 1877.]

SOME five-and-twenty years ago "The Cosy Couple," an English version of M. Octave Feuillet's "Le Village," was produced at the Lyceum Theatre, then under the management of Madame Vestris. The adapter was Mr. George H. Lewes—"Mr. Slingsby Lawrence," as he was wont to designate himself in those days; the players were Mr. Charles Mathews and the late Mr. and Mrs. Frank Mathews; and the scenic accessories were most tasteful and complete—for Madame Vestris had greatly reformed the manners and customs of the theatre in that regard. The little drama afforded the liveliest satisfaction to the public, and enjoyed many representations. Nevertheless "The Cosy Couple" is not very well remembered in these times, or it would hardly have been thought necessary to translate "Le Village" anew, and to reproduce the work as "The Vicarage, a Fireside Story," at the Prince of Wales's Theatre. It may be said at once, however, that the adapter, "Mr. Saville Rowe," has accomplished his supererogatory task creditably enough, if he has sometimes appeared perplexed between a desire to be real and colloquial in his dialogues, and a disposition to indulge in speeches of high-flown quality. The main defects of "The Vicarage" are, in truth, due to "Le Village," which is not so much a play as a little anecdote related in a dramatic fashion. M. Feuillet could hardly in the first instance have contemplated the representation of "Le Village" upon the stage; the story is so unsubstantial and artificial. There is a graceful ingenuity worthy of the author in his notion of the traveller's tales of adventure and enterprise disturbing the domestic peace and unsettling the minds of his two old friends, who lead secluded lives in a remote provincial district; but the theme seems to shrivel up before the fierce light of the stage-lamps, falls lifeless when attempt is made to embody

it in a theatre. It becomes necessary for histrionic purposes to heighten the distresses of the story, until its unreality and incredibility stand too plainly revealed, sensibility is perceived to be running to seed, and the sentiment of the situation is discovered to be false. Moreover, a painfully discordant note is struck when the traveller is supposed to be moved by a spirit of revenge, and would part the attached husband and wife, simply because thirty years before the lady had rejected his addresses as a lover. Even when M. Feuillet's work was first performed, it was felt that his facts had been unduly strained for the sake of stage effect ; but what was untrue then in "Le Village" is still more untrue now in "The Vicarage." The story would probably have attached more belief to itself if it had been considerably antedated and far removed from comparison with the conditions of modern existence ; if its events had been referred, for instance, to the last century, and the characters had assumed hair-powder and shoe-buckles. It is impossible to credit that a modern clergyman of middle age, however retired may be his manner of life, could bring about such serious perturbation as does the *Rev. Mr. Haygarth* in "The Vicarage," by a simple proposal to spend a three weeks' holiday upon the Continent. *Mrs. Haygarth*, objecting to separate from her husband even for so brief a period, might fairly offer to accompany him ; but she avoids so obvious a course, and prefers to plunge into the deepest sorrow, pining over the thought that her husband is unhappy, and that she has failed in her wifely duty of making his home comfortable and agreeable to him. "The Vicarage" had the advantage of careful representation before a well-disposed audience, and moved as much commiseration perhaps as the imperfect nature of the subject would permit ; yet the performers must surely have felt themselves somewhat removed from the range of legitimate sympathy. The few playgoers present who bore in mind "The Cosy Couple" no doubt preferred that earlier version, in which care was taken to dwell rather upon the humours than the dolours of the story ; its pleasantness and sprightliness were insisted on, and its pathos underwent no suppression, only it was not played *forte*, as at the Prince of Wales's Theatre ; the play was altogether less solemn in tone, and

therefore more thoroughly satisfactory. Mr. Kendal undertakes the part formerly filled by Mr. Charles Mathews, and spares no pains to portray the travelled bachelor, who is now called *Mr. George Clarke, C.B.*; the actor has not yet contrived, however, to suit his histrionic method to the limited area of the theatre, and is needlessly boisterous and gesticulatory. Mr. Arthur Cecil is a most lifelike representative of the country clergyman, *Mr. Haygarth*; and upon the character of the vicar's wife, which lies apart from her ordinary occupation upon the stage, Mrs. Bancroft brings to bear her most refined art, performs with all that command of pathetic expression, sensitive play of face, and musical management of voice, for which she has been justly applauded on so many previous occasions.

CVII.

"LONDON ASSURANCE."

[Prince of Wales's Theatre.—April 1877.]

"LONDON ASSURANCE" has undergone revision on the part of its author, and is now, by compression of the later and weaker scenes, played in four acts instead of five. The comedy, which dates from 1841, and may be accounted Mr. Boucicault's "*Vivian Grey*," enjoyed upon its first production the support of a specially strong company; but the extraordinary success of the work was not solely due to that fact, for it has scarcely pleased in a less degree when represented by far inferior performers. As the first work of a very young writer, "London Assurance" is surely without its compeer in the whole of our dramatic repertory; its literary merits are considerable, and the perception of theatrical effectiveness disclosed by the work in its every scene is most surprising. It is not of course pretended that nature has been very closely followed by the author; in its portrayal of real life and manners "London Assurance" is as faithful or as faithless now as ever it was. Some concession has been made to the changes wrought

by time and fashion—the characters now make mention of express trains where once they spoke of post-horses, and refer to the opera where originally they talked of the ballet—otherwise the dialogue has been but little altered. Indeed, it would have been well if, while Mr. Boucicault was engaged in the task of revision, he had struck his pen through certain exuberant passages, which can scarcely be so dear to him now as once they were, perhaps, and which too much resemble dead boughs upon a tree that is in other respects fairly sound. But in 1841 it was hardly possible for a young dramatist to avoid the flowers and figures of speech which Sheridan Knowles had rendered popular, and to this we owe without doubt the strange rhapsodies of which Mr. Boucicault's *dramatis personæ* are from time to time delivered. *Max Harkaway* still gives vent to his astounding description of "the chase in full cry;" *Charles Courtley* is as liberal with his rhodomontade as heretofore; and *Grace* is still permitted to speak of "the first tear that glistens in the opening eye of morning," "the silent song breathed by the flowers,"—an Irish melody without doubt,—"the thrilly choir of the woodland minstrels, to which the modest brook trickles applause," and to retain her extraordinary account of *Lady Gay*: "Nature in some frolic mood shut up a merry devil in her eye, and spiting Art, stole joy's brightest harmony to thrill her laugh, which peals out sorrow's knell"—with much more wordy trash of the same sort. It is to be understood, however, that "London Assurance" is a comedy of high spirits. The characters were at no time new to the stage, but they were admirably suited to their first representatives; and perhaps in 1841 languor and apathy were not such prevalent moods and affectations as in these later days. Something of what may be called Tom-and-Jerryism still survived, or *Charles Courtley* would not have entered in quite so inebrious a condition, nor would he have appropriated so freely the door-knockers of his neighbours. The success of the representation at the Prince of Wales's Theatre demonstrates the vitality of "London Assurance;" certainly it has survived the departure of the comedies by the same hand that followed it. "The School for Scheming," "Old Heads and Young Hearts," "Alma

Mater," "Love in a Maze," "The Irish Heiress," seem to have vanished altogether from the stage. The performers who most distinguish themselves are those whose air of natural gaiety best qualifies them for the hilarious and frolicsome duties devolving upon them. Mrs. Bancroft plays *Pert* with charming brightness and sauciness; and Mr. Honey as *Mark Meddle* displays abundant comicality and grotesqueness. Mr. Arthur Cecil provides an artistic impersonation of *Sir Harcourt Courtly*; and the valet, *Cool*, is represented in a very lifelike manner by Mr. Sugden. Mr. Bancroft's *Dazzle* may be credited with energy, good-humour, and good intentions, at any rate; and Mr. Kendal, though inclined to over-act, is yet to be viewed as a competent *Charles Courtly*. Mrs. Kendal is scarcely seen to advantage as *Lady Gay*; and certainly Mr. Kemble is rather dull than droll as *Dolly Spanker*. But the representation generally seemed to afford satisfaction to the audience.

CVIII.

"THE LYONS MAIL."

[Lyceum Theatre.—May 1877.]

THE old melodrama of "The Courier of Lyons" endures and thrives less because it is founded upon fact, and traces its source to a real *cause célèbre* of the days of the Directory, than by reason of its rapid action, its exciting incidents, and the opportunity it provides for the accomplishment of a sort of histrionic exploit. First represented at the Théâtre de la Gaïeté, Paris, in 1850, the play underwent adaptation at the hands of Mr. Charles Reade, and was produced by Mr. Charles Kean at the Princess's Theatre in 1854. With the new title of "The Lyons Mail," it has now been revived in order that Mr. Irving, following Mr. Kean's example, may sustain the two characters of the worthy *M. Lesurques* and the villanous *Dubosc*. In Paris the dramatist, divided between his regard for truth and his sense of poetical justice, supplied the work with two

terminations. If on one night *M. Lesurques* was hurried to the guillotine, on the next a reprieve arrived, his life was spared, and *Dubosc* was understood to suffer in his stead ; just as, two centuries ago, it was the fashion of the English stage to end "Romeo and Juliet" now as a tragedy, with the sacrifice of the lovers, and now as a comedy, with their happy marriage. Mr. Charles Reade has disdained compromise of this kind, sharing perhaps the Laureate's repugnance for "a lie which is half a truth." In "The Lyons Mail" at the Lyceum, as in "The Courier of Lyons" at the Princess's, the real nature of the catastrophe has been wholly disregarded ; the play concludes as the audience would have it conclude—in the approved way, with the escape of the innocent and the punishment of the guilty. In the theatre the requirements of fiction may not be neglected ; and if facts stand in the way—so much the worse for the facts !

The intrinsic qualities of the work are not remarkable ; it does not aim at literary distinction, it has been denied the relief of humour, and it presents no heroine strongly appealing to sympathy. But the play is ingeniously contrived in regard to the "dual impersonation," for the sake of which it really exists, and certainly the story interests in spite, if not because, of the violence and rudeness of its transactions. Productions of this class are not to be subjected to the rules governing classical or poetic tragedy. The melodramatic *Medea* is well entitled to slay her children before the people, and indeed to make very clear to the pit the thoroughness of the butchery ; the crimes of the cut-throat *Dubosc* are not held to be by any means too horrible for achievement in the presence of the audience. Certainly there is rather a slaughter-house air about certain of the incidents, such as the stabbing of *Jeanne*, the wretched woman whom *Dubosc* has betrayed and plundered, and the brutal murder of the postilion and guard of the mail-coach ; but the purveyor of melodrama feels himself bound to thrill his public, to make their blood curdle and their flesh creep, by any expedients that may occur to him. "The Lyons Mail," however, is raised somewhat above ordinary melodrama, owing to the peculiarity of its construction, and the necessity for the two characters of

Lesurques and *Dubosc* being impersonated by the same actor. On this account performers of eminence have lent their aid to a production which otherwise they could scarcely have countenanced. There is art of course in this feat of portraying alternately vice and virtue, if it may be removed somewhat from "the purpose of playing," and if it directs the regard of the audience less to the drama itself than to one of the conditions of its representation. The question of identity has to be presented in a very practical form to the spectators; the actor is required to pass rapidly from one character to the other; to depict with the same brush, and almost at the same moment, physical likeness and moral unlikeness. Mr. Charles Kean's efforts in this respect were highly successful; Mr. Irving's performance is as fully deserving of applause. As an actor, Mr. Irving is characterised by peculiarities of aspect, gait, and demeanour which are not readily laid aside, and might be thought to interfere with his present undertaking, and to render the resemblance existing between *Dubosc* and *Lesurques* too striking for credibility or for the purposes of the drama. But the actor is able to overcome all difficulty of this kind; his *Dubosc* resembles his *Lesurques* only in stature and in shape of features. It may be, indeed, that Mr. Irving, adhering to the traditional method of personating the characters, renders them too dissimilar—either lays excess of stress upon the refinement, the elegance, and the dignity of *Lesurques*, or else exaggerates the coarseness and the brutality of *Dubosc*. Hardened criminal as he is, *Dubosc* is yet the captain, the intellect, and the master-spirit of the gang of robbers; something of the highwayman of the last century—the rude gaiety, the brave bearing, of *Captain Macheath* for instance, may possibly have distinguished him. Likeness does not depend merely upon trick of face; it rests considerably upon general air and bearing. In "The Lyons Mail" the audience are left unconvinced by the persistency of the witnesses as to the identity of the characters; they are not really so much alike as they are stated to be; in truth the actor displays more versatility than is required. Mr. Irving's greatest success is obtained in the second act; he represents powerfully *Lesurques'* anguish of mind when the

proof of his guilt strengthens more and more, and *Jerome*, his father, denounces him as an assassin, and proposes to him suicide as the only escape from infamy. The actor's exertions were rewarded by frequent and well-merited applause. The reception of the play was, indeed, most enthusiastic.

CIX.

"THE MOONSTONE."

[Olympic Theatre.—September 1877.]

THE new drama of "The Moonstone," which Mr. Wilkie Collins has founded upon his famous novel of that name, is perhaps more ingenious than interesting. The story in the course of its transfer to the stage has undergone considerable change, and especially suffers by the suppression of its more romantic qualities. The great yellow diamond stolen from the forehead of the God of the Moon at the siege of Seringapatam has been deprived of its supernatural attributes; it is no longer an object of veneration to mysterious Brahmins pertinaciously seeking for it, and capable of any crime in their anxiety to repossess it; the play presents matters after a more prosaic fashion, and greatly reduces the value of the gem as a means of impressing and exciting. It is now simply a precious stone, endowed with little more historic interest than attaches to any other diamond contained in a jeweller's shop; it is appropriated for a time by a gentleman in a somnambulistic state as the result of an indigestible supper; but it is ultimately recovered, and is destined, we learn, as the curtain falls, not to adorn again the forehead of the Indian idol, but to be broken up for the benefit of the poor. The incidents of the novel have, indeed, undergone a general process of simplification, retrenchment, and reform. *Franklin Blake* is no longer plied with opium; no *Ezra Jennings* appears to startle people with his piebald hair, and to dissolve the mystery of the plot by registering the delirious ravings of Mr. Candy, the Frizinghall general practitioner; and all

mention is forborne of the eccentric housemaid Rosanna Spearman, whose unrequited passion for *Franklin* led to her secreting the smeared nightgown which proved his guilt in a japanned tin case buried in the Shivering Sand. Altogether, the drama gratifies less than the novel; the subject is better suited to narration than to representation. It is perhaps a defect in Mr. Collins's art, when it becomes to be applied to the purposes of the stage, that it leaves nothing to the imagination of the audience; every incident in the story is formally set forth and fully proved, as it were, upon oath, like evidence in a court of justice; each link in the chain of events is duly forged, welded, and perfected. There is an artistic conscientiousness about this system of composition which tends greatly to the convincing and charming of the reader, who is far less disposed than is the playgoer to meet the author half-way, to take things for granted, and to connive cordially at his own illusion. Readers may be said to exercise the functions of a jury, and to pronounce a sober verdict upon circumstances that have been strictly and legally demonstrated; whereas playgoers more nearly resemble the irresponsible lookers-on in court, who are privileged to rush at random conclusions, to be swayed hither and thither by their prepossessions, and to applaud anything that happens to please them at the moment. A certain tediousness afflicts at intervals the play of "*The Moonstone*" from the dramatist's devotion to circumstantial relation. It is somewhat trying to have to listen while curious cases are cited in proof of the phenomena of somnambulism, and extracts are read from such works as Combe on "*Phrenology*" or Elliotson's "*Human Physiology*" in reference to diseased brains or disordered stomachs. But it is only fair to add that when the conditions under which Mr. Collins elects to write allow of his being dramatic, he is very dramatic indeed. The scene, for instance, in the third act where *Rachel* denounces her lover as a thief, and treats with pitiless scorn his protestations of innocence, is admirably forcible and effective. And generally it may be said that the author has displayed excellent skill in contriving a compact drama out of such superabundant materials. There is no incoherence or unintelligibility; the spectator is never required to refer to

the book to obtain comprehension of the play. Mr. Collins's constructive power has even tempted him to unusual regard for the prescriptions of the classical drama. The scene, representing the inner hall of *Miss Verinder's* country-house, remains unchanged throughout, and the action is confined to a period of twenty-four hours.

"The Moonstone" is carefully, and sometimes very effectively, represented; the players so far following the author as to be thoroughly dramatic when he permits them, and in some degree dull when he is too prosily insistent upon detail. Miss Pateman seemed at first content to be but a fashion-book figure, artificial and apathetic: as the play proceeded, however, the lady developed unexpected resources, and the scenes of *Rachel's* conflict with her lover *Franklin* were rendered with genuine abandonment to the passion of the situation. Miss Pateman's energy and intensity received, as they well deserved, the heartiest applause. Mr. Neville is successful in the rather thankless part of *Franklin Blake*, whose monotonous occupation it is to be incessantly displaying amazement at his own dishonesty. Mr. Swinbourne, an actor well practised in the poetic drama, brings an air of *Macduff* or some such hero to his portrayal of *Sergeant Cuff*, the detective officer; the actor's solemn sententious manner is impressive, however, and is not without a certain humour of its own. *Betteridge*, the old butler, is forcibly and elaborately represented by *Mr. Hill*, whose comicality will not be denied. *Miss Clack*, who in the play, it must be confessed, wearies far more than she amuses, is personated by Mrs. Seymour, an actress prone to exaggeration and indiscreetly anxious to be droll.

CX.

"THE HOUSE OF DARNLEY."

[Court Theatre.—October 1877.]

A CRITIC wrote concisely of the late Lord Lytton's play of "Not so Bad as we Seem," that it was "not so good as we expected." Perhaps a like judgment might fairly be passed

upon the noble author's posthumous comedy, "The House of Darnley." It was inevitable, however, that Lord Lytton's fame should stimulate hope unduly. The author of "The Lady of Lyons" and of "Money" may reasonably be reckoned the most successful English dramatist of the nineteenth century. It may be said at once that with those established works the new comedy cannot afford comparison. But in estimating the worth of "The House of Darnley" it is very necessary to bear in mind the peculiar conditions under which it is submitted to the public. The play was left in an unfinished state; the whole of the last act has been furnished by Mr. Coghlan, who was without other clue than his fancy could suggest as to the original design of the dramatist. More than any other literary work, a drama must benefit by revision and reconsideration on the part of its author; in such wise weak points in construction may be strengthened, gaps in the story supplied, the dialogue braced, and the action quickened. "The House of Darnley" has been denied these advantages, and without doubt suffers seriously from the lack of them.

At what period of his career Lord Lytton wrote his four acts we are uninformed. He may have freshly remembered Macready's vigour and passion and Helen Faucit's musical elocution when he first thought of placing upon the stage the dignified banker *Darnley* and his fond if fantastic wife, *Lady Juliet*. The work is true to the elder traditions of comedy. The characters own something of the theatrical stateliness of a past time; they speak sententiously; their phrases ring harmoniously, are endowed with oratorical regard for ornament. The dialogue is conducted in what used to be called "numerous prose," relieved at intervals by artificial banter and repartee of the kind dear to Pelham and Kenelm Chillingley; of the colloquialisms, the slang, and the "chaff" of our later drama, "The House of Darnley" exhibits few traces. Lord Lytton held that the speeches of the players, like their complexions, needed the assistance of cosmetics; that the stage should so mirror Nature as to show her at her shapeliest, and invest her proportions with heroic grace and symmetry. It is to be said, however, that the dramatist's characters do not forfeit

substantiality or semblance to flesh and blood for all the exaltation of their demeanour. They interest and impress, as though realism had been strictly regarded in their composition, and they differed but little from the vapid creatures of everyday life. The ear soon becomes attuned to the changed key and the loftier concord of their discourse. In truth, the play does not suffer practically from its artificial character, pronounced though this be. A certain sense of pleasure results, indeed, from the spectacle of these dignified personages, with their measured speeches, their florid sentiments, their polished airs, and formal manners.

But the story set forth by the play, while it contains several robust scenes, is of slight and infirm constitution. The *dramatis personæ* are required to connive too manifestly and mechanically at their own distresses. They open and shut their eyes, they speak or are silent, they understand or misunderstand each other, rather in compliance with the exigencies of the plot than with the dictates of reason. The jealousy and distrust that arise between *Darnley* and his wife are not of natural growth; they are the forced plants of a playwright's heated imagination. There is defective art in the treatment of the mysterious lady introduced in the first act and then apparently forgotten by the original author; she is seen no more until Mr. Coghlan is constrained to bring her again upon the scene for the sake of a superfluous explanation in the fifth act. Of course the audience dispel promptly the mystery concerning her, and decide upon her first appearance that she is the victim of the profligate *Sir Francis Marsden*, that she is the long-lost sister of the amiable philosopher *Mr. Mainwaring*, and that she has been generously assisted in her misfortunes by the rich and exemplary *Darnley*. But a benevolent gentleman who is so injudicious as to secrete a lady in a St. John's Wood villa, must be prepared to have his charitable motives misinterpreted, especially by his wife, when informed by accident of her husband's curious proceedings. The *Darnleys* of real life do not act in this way; but if the *Darnley* of the stage did not so conduct himself, the comedy would terminate at its second scene. Nor is it

probable that *Darnley* would so long defer relating to *Mainwaring* the fact of the discovery of his sister, and the pity and relief her sufferings demand. The effective scene in which the husband, by reciting a sort of apologue, warns his wife and her lover of their perilous position, seems borrowed from the "Gabrielle" of Emile Augier; while it must be in strange ignorance or defiance of the *Neighbour Constance* of Sheridan Knowles and the *Lady Gay Spanker* of Mr. Boucicault that Lord Lytton has intrusted his *Miss Placid* with yet another description of a fox-hunt. Among the other stale expedients of the play may be noted *Miss Placid's* efforts to escape marriage with *Mr. Fyshe*, by now affecting to be almost dumbly demure, and now assuming the airs and playing the pranks of a tomboy. Of Mr. Coghlan's last act the dialogue is perhaps the best part. Poetic justice is considered in the termination of the story, and yet it seems clear that the end is not brought about quite after Lord Lytton's manner. *Lady Juliet's* sale of her diamonds to avert the bankruptcy of her husband should rather have won back his tenderness than have provoked him to new wrath.

With all its defects, "The House of Darnley" secures the attention and the respect of the audience, and succeeds in right of its own good qualities, and not merely because of the esteem in which the performances of its departed author are generally held. If the theme be weak, it is yet strongly handled, and demonstrates sufficiently the wit and the humour and the literary accomplishments of the late Lord Lytton. The characters may not be new creations, but they are forcibly and effectively defined. The comedy has been provided for with the good taste and liberality which have so laudably distinguished Mr. Hare's management. The scenes representing the oak hall at *Lord Fithollow's* and the drawing-room and library at *Mr. Darnley's* are admirable examples of the pictorial illusion of the theatre. Mr. Hare plays with spirit the minor part of *Mainwaring*; Mr. Kelly personates *Darnley* with excellent force, feeling, and self-command. Mr. Titheradge, a new actor, is a creditable representative of the worthless *Sir Francis Marsden*; the calm timidity and the deliberate and calculating selfishness of *Mr. Fyshe* are perfectly por-

trayed by Mr. A. Bishop. The part of *Lady Juliet* perhaps overtaxes Miss Ellen Terry's physical resources; the actress is required to iterate her griefs and to maintain an attitude of anguish and despair during too protracted a period. The character, however, could hardly have been more picturesquely, gracefully, or pathetically represented. Miss Amy Roselle is most vivacious as *Miss Placid*; and Miss B. Henri's artistic rendering of the little part of the mysterious lady—the playbill does not reveal her Christian or surname—is well deserving of recognition.

CXI.

"DIPLOMACY."

[Prince of Wales's Theatre.—January 1878.]

M. SARDOU'S *comédie-drame* "Dora," first represented with singular success at the Théâtre du Vaudeville in January last year, has been arranged for performance in English, and is now called "Diplomacy." The five acts of the original have been reduced to four, and many changes have been effected, in regard less to the nature of the story, however, than to the nationality of its personages.

The play is a result of that frantic hatred of spies which has flourished in France since the war with Germany. The political sentiment which M. Sardou has converted to theatrical uses could hardly be translated, however. A young English lady charged with sending to Russia a plan of the fortifications of Constantinople is of inferior dramatic value to the young Frenchwoman accused of stealing important despatches and selling them to the Germans. The French feeling against Germany does not find its equivalent in the prejudice entertained by certain Englishmen against Russia. *Maurillac*, the young *diplomate* who marries the French *Dora*, appears in "Diplomacy" as an English officer, one *Captain Beauderc*, who, in his capacity of military *attaché*, is intrusted with the conveyance of political papers from Paris to Vienna; yet *Captain*

Beauclerc is English only in name, or he retains, at any rate in his treatment of his wife and in his exhibitions of indignation and grief, much of *Maurillac's* French frenzy of manner. Certainly there is little of English nature in his wild despair, his strange speech, his moanings and sobbings, when he is constrained to credit his wife's guilt; nor is his conduct that of an English officer when he ventures upon the proposal, which *Dora* herself rejects, that he shall become an accomplice in her sins, and that they shall continue to live and love together as though her alleged acts of theft and treachery had never been. *Faverolle*, the light-hearted member of Parliament who acts as the good genius of the play, now becomes *Mr. Beauclerc*, the grave elder brother of *Captain Beauclerc*, and secretary of the Embassy at Paris; the *Baron Vander Kraft*, the German Fouché, who employs a Cytheræan cohort of spies, appears as *Baron Stein*; the young Austrian *Tékly* is renamed *Count Orloff*; and the *Princess Bariatine* finds representation of a sort in the person of *Lady Henry Fairfax*, supposed to be the wife of the English Minister at Constantinople. These changes have been accomplished dexterously enough; it may be doubted, however, whether they were really necessary, or whether they benefit appreciably the prospects of the play in England. As a rule, it is to be desired that an author's design should not be interfered with; while changes of name certainly fail to bring about conversions of nature or to induce the acceptance of French portraits as English likenesses. *Dora* and the *Beauclercs* are French people engaged in French adventures, enduring French sufferings, all the statements of the adapters to the contrary notwithstanding.

"Diplomacy" is a thoroughly effective drama, however, and completely succeeded in representation, as it deserved to succeed, for its own sake, not less than because of the merits of the players. M. Sardou, in point of knowledge of the stage and skill in the construction of a plot, has no living superior. He is possessed of much inventiveness, and he depends considerably upon his recollection. He does not hesitate to lay preceding works under contribution when it seems to him that they can enrich his fables by a character or a situation, an effect or a scene. As a

writer he may be surpassed by certain of his contemporaries; but if his dialogue sometimes lacks wit, it is rarely deficient in animation and appositeness. The defects of his plays arise often from the excess of his merits. He is apt to be super-subtle, and to oppress by the exuberance of his ingenuity. The spectator grows perplexed sometimes by the dramatist's endless encounters of wit and skill, the constant spectacle of wheel within wheel, of diamond cutting diamond, and of plot opposed by counter-plot. And now and then, in his regard for the mechanism of his task, M. Sardou loses sight of nature altogether. Improbability should be permitted the story-teller as an occasional privilege, but there is danger in reducing characters to the condition of mere puppets, moved not by reason, but jerked hither and thither in accordance with the caprice or the exigencies of their showman. The plot of "Diplomacy" has its weak places, and sometimes seems to hold together by defying verisimilitude altogether, and by the open connivance of the leading *dramatis personæ*. In the English version of the comedy the first and second acts are combined, and the *Countess Zicka's* confession is retrenched; she no longer avows her early sins as a thief, a beggar, and the wife of a forger, by way of preparing the spectators for her subsequent purloining of the despatch. The strong *scène des trois hommes* occurs, therefore, in the second act of "Diplomacy." Here *Orloff* has to relate with exceeding reluctance his conviction that he owes his arrest by the Russian police to the perfidy of *Dora*, the bride of *Captain Beauclerc*. The interview which follows between the newly-married is far too prolonged, and scarcely sustains the interest which had been excited by the earlier scenes. The afflictions of the husband become wearisome by their repetition and demonstrativeness, and the devices of the dramatist seem to be here very near the surface. The last act pertains rather to *vaudeville* than to *drame*, or even to *comédie-drame*. Clearly the *Countess Zicka*, supposing her a living creature, would not have fallen into the trap laid for her; but it was indispensable that the play should end, and end happily; so M. Sardou forthwith takes pains to be comical, and forces

his characters to assume attitudes upon which the curtain may comfortably descend.

Good plays make good players. The performance of "Diplomacy" left little to be desired, and was entirely free from that air of genteel torpor which sometimes oppresses the stage of the Prince of Wales's Theatre. Mr. Bancroft contents himself with the small part of *Orloff*, and relates the story of his arrest, and of his consequent distrust of *Dora*, with artistic forbearance and adroitness. Mrs. Bancroft strengthens the cast by the spirit with which she sustains the incredible character of the *Countess Zicka*. Mr. Clayton is impressive as the elder *Beauclerc*, and enchances the representation by his skill in byplay and facial expression; while nothing could be better in their way than the *Baron Stein* of Mr. Cecil, and the *Algie Fairfax* of Mr. Sugden. As *Captain Beauclerc* Mr. Kendal seems over-anxious to be impassioned, and declines somewhat into the conventions of French melodrama. The character of *Dora*, an *ingéune* with a capacity for pathetic and even tragic expression, hardly suits Mrs. Kendal's present means. The actress plays with grace and skill; but the artifices of her histrionic manner are too manifest, and her lack of youthful impulsiveness and genuine spontaneity is seriously felt. The scenes between *Dora* and her husband are assuredly clamorous enough, but deficient in the qualities which rouse the sympathies of an audience.

CXII.

"A FOOL AND HIS MONEY."

[Globe Theatre.—January 1878.]

MR. BYRON'S new comic drama has obviously been written for the sake of Mr. Toole. The dramatist has on many previous occasions taken the measure, so to speak, of the popular comedian,—never drawing the tape too tightly, but allowing him always room enough for his comicality to

move freely in, and even to develop itself largely; and perhaps "A Fool and his Money" is hardly inferior to other works by the same hand contrived with a like object. Of course there can be little exercise of art in productions of the class; but a measure of ingenuity is needed in finding fresh opportunities for the actor, and in helping him to make the audience laugh as loudly and as continuously as possible. The bustle and the exaggerations of farce are permitted; the dialogue may be studded with jokes old and new, quips and cranks of all kinds; the story may be wildly improbable; and indeed the dramatist is fully licensed to do what he lists, provided only that he keeps his leading interpreter actively employed and constantly before the audience. Mr. Byron has again selected his hero from humble life, for somehow the lowly are understood to be always more ridiculous than the lofty, and exhibits once more that familiar frolic of Fortune, which consists in suddenly enriching a poor man only with equal promptitude to reduce him again to his original condition. Like Mr. Thackeray's "James," Mr. Byron's *Charles* rises from domestic service to affluence; attempts to figure as a gentleman of property; and then resumes his former state, poetical justice kindly softening his fall by accommodating him with a public-house as a happy retreat for the rest of his days, and a pretty and tender housemaid for him to take to wife. This *Charles Liquorpond*, or *Charles*, as he calls himself, and is always called, is a very droll person, who deals with the English language much after Mrs. Malaprop's manner, but is chargeable with an infirm sense of morality. By exercise of what the law terms "undue influence," and by abuse of his position as butler and confidential servant in the household of an invalid old gentleman, he has obtained a will in his own favour and the disinheriting of the testator's rightful heir, one *Percival Ransome*. He purchases an estate in Wales, affects the airs of a country squire, and palters with his love for his old fellow-servant, *Mary Draper* the housemaid, in his ambition to marry *Miss Vandeleur*, the daughter of a showy but needy relation of his departed master. Another and less amusing portion of the story relates to the adventures of *Percival Ransome*, whose fallen for-

tunes compel him to accept the post of footman in the establishment of *Charles* the ex-butler. The fable is conducted in a very violent fashion, proceeds by leaps and bounds, and concludes with the abrupt dispossession of *Charles*. It is certainly strange that he should have known nothing of the suit in the Probate Court which was to set aside the will in his favour, and that he should so quietly accept his defeat at the hands of the lawful inheritor of the property; but probably the author never intended his plot to be the subject of serious consideration. Having shown Mr. Toole as one of the oddest of butlers, and as a caricature of a landowner in Wales, much perplexed by the language and customs of the country, and especially oppressed by the attentions of a native bard, equally devoted to poesy and liquor, Mr. Byron may have held that he had satisfactorily accomplished the task he had prescribed to himself. "A Fool and his Money" does not, perhaps, invite respect, but certainly it occasions much amusement. As *Charles*, Mr. Toole entertains and gratifies his audience very thoroughly; his eccentric butler, indeed, may be viewed as a valuable addition to his already extensive gallery of facetious portraits. The other characters are of minor importance. Mr. Herbert, however, is an adequate representative of *Percival Ransome*; Mr. Righton is most vivacious as *Brabazon Vandeleur*; and Miss Eliza Johnstone personates with admirable spirit the fond but vehement housemaid, *Mary Draper*.

CXIII.

"VICTIMS."

[Court Theatre.—January 1878.]

THE revival of Mr. Tom Taylor's comedy of "Victims," originally presented at the Haymarket in 1857, must surely be due less to the intrinsic merits of the work than to the prevailing dearth of new dramas. Comedies are not improved by keeping; and "Victims," although some attempt

has been made to redecorate and modernise it, plainly exhibits signs of age, and even of decay. Certain of the characters—the two bores, *Curdle* the economist, and *Muddlemist* the metaphysician—have undergone complete suppression; the dialogue has been revised in the hope of investing its allusions with current significance; the name of Mr. Swinbourne is now mentioned where once Mr. Tennyson was referred to; and by way of adding the point of personality to rather blunt satire, *Miss Crane*, the strong-minded lady who advocates the rights of woman, is now called *Miss Pecker*. The play is professedly an original production; but this may perhaps merely import that it is not an absolute translation. Traces of a foreign foundation are here and there discernible, and seeing that Mr. Taylor has so long been famous rather as an adapter than as an inventor—often, indeed, borrowing by stealth, as it were, and blushing afterwards to find it fame—it may reasonably be concluded that the theme of “Victims” enjoyed some sort of existence before it was pressed into the service of the British stage. The comedy pleased, however, at the Haymarket, supported by the strong company then directed by Mr. Buckstone; nor does it fail to amuse at the Court Theatre. But by the more subdued and refined system of interpretation now assigned to it, the coarseness of the play’s artifices and the rude unreality of its characters stand fully betrayed. Twenty years ago an element of boisterous farce was indispensable to comedy at the Haymarket, while of acting generally it may be said that it was then required to be rather theatrically effective than punctiliously lifelike. Mr. Hare’s strict regard for truth and nature, and his affection for a *mise en scène* of fantastically picturesque quality, seem out of harmony with dramas of rough humour and broad caricature. The dignity of comedy perhaps paired off long since with the dignity of history; still in plays affecting to portray modern life, manners, and character, a certain reserve seems desirable in regard to the means employed to stir mirth. The crowning incident of “Victims” relates to the accidental delivery to a strong-minded woman in the course of an evening party of a pair of trousers in lieu of the satin dress or the India shawl she had been led to expect. The situa-

tion is unquestionably comical; but it must be said that the laughter that ensues is obtained by sacrificing probability and artistic propriety. Earlier portions of the play deal with the enthusiasm of a stockbroker's wife, who much undervalues her husband, on behalf of a young poet who neglects his wife—the undervalued husband and the neglected wife constituting the real “victims” of the story. The interest arising from the collision, so to speak, of these four personages, is not very strong, and completely fades away at the end of the second act. The stockbroker is hardly a typical stockbroker, for he is gifted with a simplicity so consummate that it verges on imbecility; while the poet is represented as a thoroughly contemptible creature. Of course the lady's eyes are at last opened to the genuine worth of her husband and the worthlessness of her lover for all his poetic gifts, while the neglected wife is consoled as the curtain prepares to fall by a promise of fuller domestic happiness in the future and the amendment of her culpable partner. These materials were not very fresh in 1857; they seem now certainly vapid and commonplace. What may be called the usual seasoning of comic servants, speaking in Cockney tones and mispronouncing after a Cockney fashion, has been supplied with a liberal hand; and other subordinate characters, including one *Butterby*, the comic lover of the strong-minded woman, who is responsible for the mistake of sending her the trousers, enrich the list of *dramatis personæ*, and contribute more or less to the entertainment of the audience.

As a work of art or of literature, “Victims” might easily be overrated; it is only fair to recognise, however, its merits as an acting drama. Mr. Taylor is skilled in the playwright's craft, is usually careful not to miss his mark by aiming too high, and takes especial pains to secure the suffrages of the gallery. The performance did not flag, and was frequently greeted with applause. Mr. Kelly's gifts as an actor of dignity and impressiveness are somewhat wasted upon such a flimsy character as *Mr. Merryweather* the stockbroker, originally played by Mr. Howe; while Mr. Hare seems uncomfortably placed as the young poet *Herbert Fitzherbert*. Miss Ellen Terry as *Mrs. Merry-*

weather thoroughly enters into the spirit of the character, and portrays with ease and grace the lady of æsthetic tastes, enjoying delicate health, poetic aspirations, and exceeding sensibility. In strong contrast appears Mrs. G. Murray as *Miss Pecker*, robust of aspect and masculine of dress, with manners and bearing suggestive of the lecture-hall and the woman's rights platform. This character was admirably impersonated. To give due effect to Mr. Buckstone's old part of *Butterby*, the services of Mr. J. Clarke have been expressly engaged. The popular comedian was very warmly received, and contributed valuably to the success of the representation. Other characters were well sustained by Miss B. Henri, Mr. Bishop, and Mr. Cooper.

CXIV.

"LOUIS XI."

[Lyceum Theatre.—March 1878.]

CASIMIR DELAVIGNE is chiefly known in England by his tragedy of "Louis XI.," although other of his dramas, instance "Don Juan d'Autriche" and "Marino Faliero," have been pressed into the service of our stage. As in "Marino Faliero" he borrowed from Lord Byron, so in "Louis XI." he depended upon Sir Walter Scott, whose "Quentin Durward" was at one time a very popular book in France. The tragedy was first produced at the Théâtre Français in 1832, when the leading character was "created," or incarnated, by Ligier, an actor of fame in his day, for whose behoof Alexandre Dumas the elder was at one time planning an adaptation of Shakspeare's "Macbeth."

Although "Louis XI." deals with history pure and simple, with scarce a grain of fictitious or invented matter, it is not a historical play of the Shakspearean pattern. It presents no series of pictures of an eventful past, demanding—

"A muse of fire,
A kingdom for a stage, princes to act,
And monarchs to behold the swelling scene."

It does not crowd the stage with illustrious personages, "in little room confining mighty men." It respects the prescriptions of French classical tragedy, the unities of time and place; the scene does not move from Plessis-les-Tours, and seven years are skipped over, so that the death of Louis may follow hard upon the death of Charles the Bold, an anachronism being held preferable to the sacrifice of a unity. Nor has the dramatist contented himself with these restraints and disabilities. His play possesses no heroine, no plot, and no characters to speak of, save only *Louis* himself. To invest him with importance, a general system of suppression and demolition has been ruthlessly enforced, and the King has been portrayed in the most glaring colours, laid on not without art assuredly, but yet so fiercely and coarsely that the confines of caricature are oftentimes something more than approached. The Louis of Scott's novel is not altogether an unsympathetic character; but M. Delavigne's *Louis* is a monster who is all faults. The French dramatist does not recognise, with Victor Hugo, or with one greater than he, that "there is some soul of goodness in things evil." *Triboulet's* physical defects are forgotten in his devotion to his daughter; the moral deformity of *Lucrezia* is purified by her love for her son; but the *Louis* of the tragedy knows no redeeming point, is odious and despicable in all respects; is scarcely human, indeed, in his lack of every natural feeling and worthier impulse. The murderer of his father and brother, he is jealous and suspicious of his own son; he is at once a bold criminal and an abject coward; cool and crafty, he yet permits himself frenzies of rage; a bloodthirsty tyrant, he is a slave to the most degrading superstitions, consummately hypocritical, and yet grossly bigoted. It is certainly curious that a French writer of M. Delavigne's rank should thus present one of the most eminent, sagacious, and successful of the rulers of France. But although M. Delavigne may have failed as a historian, he has surely succeeded, not as a dramatist exactly, but as an adroit tactician of the theatre. He has brought upon the stage a very impressive figure—his *Louis* takes rank with the *Gloucester* of Cibber, let us say, rather than of Shakspeare, in the opportunity it affords actors of pretence to illustrate character by means of strong

incisive strokes, to deal in facial expression and passionate display, to be both humorous and tragical, and from first to last to arrest and dominate the emotions of the audience in a very extraordinary degree. The play is often feeble, and always monotonous; but Louis remains one of those commanding parts, the force and the attractions of which are deeply felt both by the players and their public.

Charles Kean's *Louis XI.* was modelled upon the impersonation of Ligier, and was thought by many to have surpassed its original. It was the actor's most successful achievement, and was remarkable for its intensity and concentrated power, for its absolute self-command not less than for its moments of sudden abandonment to the vehemence and passion of the situation. In this part the actor's physical peculiarities, his eccentricities of look and tone, gait and gesture, were, if not forgotten, so merged in his performance, as to lend it valuable support and distinction. Mr. Kean first represented the character at the Princess's Theatre in 1855, in a version of the tragedy prepared by Mr. Boucicault, who contented himself with compressing the text, converting its mellifluous rhymes into blank verse, which, if it here and there soared towards bombast, as often declined into colloquy, and in so softening the catastrophe as to spare the life of *Nemours*: a change of very little value. It is in Mr. Boucicault's arrangement of the play that Mr. Irving is now appearing at the Lyceum Theatre.

Mr. Irving's success in "Richard III." almost ensured his triumph in the part of *Louis XI.*—an inferior *Gloucester*, mean and cowardly, sick and weak, credulous and fanatic, grovelling at the feet of priests and physicians. The actor presents a most conscientious, artistic, and elaborate study of the character. He is more senile, perhaps, than have been other representatives of *Louis*, who was but sixty when he died; the quavering note of age and decrepitude is heard even in his strongest and boldest utterances; the hand of death seems to oppress him even from his first entrance. But Mr. Irving is true to his own conception of his part, and allowing for a trifling excess of accent now and then when it is deemed expedient to insist upon some special point, his performance is throughout very masterly,

even and consistent, subtle and finished. There is no neglect of the small delicate touches which give completeness to a picture, while the stronger portions of the design are executed with supreme breadth and boldness. Mr. Irving boasts the great actor's art or gift of at once riveting the attention of his audience; presently his influence extends more and more, until each word and glance and action of this strange king he represents—so grotesque of aspect, so cat-like of movement, so ape-like of gesture, so venomous in his spite, so demoniac in his rage, and meanwhile so vile and paltry and cringing a poltroon—are watched and followed with a nervous absorption that has something about it of fascination or even of terror. The performance reaches its climax perhaps in the king's paroxysms of fear after *Nemour's* assault upon him; the actor's passionate rendering of this scene, his panic-stricken cries and moans prayers, and threats, and the spectacle of physical prostration that ensues, affecting the audience very powerfully. The death of the king is elaborately treated, but with no undue straining after the horrible; for the protraction of the scene the dramatist must be held chiefly accountable. Here, the slipping of the sceptre through the flaccid nerveless fingers of *Louis*, the moment after he has announced himself "strong and capable," may be noted as an original and ingenious artifice on the part of the actor. In his assumption of the chief characters of the more heroic or poetic drama, Mr. Irving may now and then have failed to satisfy critical demands; it is certain, however, that in these distinct and individual impersonations he is seen to signal advantage, and can afford comparison with the best artists of his class. There is probably no actor now living who can present such an interpretation of *Louis XI.* as Mr. Irving offers nightly at the Lyceum Theatre. The tragedy has been handsomely equipped for representation; the scenery and costumes are tasteful and appropriate, occasionally reviving memories of Doré's illustrations to the "*Contes Drolatiques*" of Balzac. The subordinate characters are not very forcibly performed; but M. Delavigne has left them vague and colourless. It is difficult to distinguish *Oliver* the barber from *Tristan* the hangman, or *Commune* the historian from

Coitier the physician. The character of *Nemours*, however, affords some opportunities for pathetic expression; of these Mr. Tyars does not take advantage.

CXV.

"OLIVIA."

[Court Theatre.—April 1878.]

"OLIVIA" is Mr. Wills's most satisfactory contribution to the stage. Avowedly founded "upon a leading incident in the 'Vicar of Wakefield'"—it would be perhaps more correct to say "leading incidents"—the drama is faithful rather to the sentiment than to the humour of Goldsmith's immortal story, and presents the characters of the original under their most serious aspect. On this account the earlier scenes, lacking dramatic action, move somewhat heavily, and the spectator has to be content with the picturesque qualities of the entertainment: the playwright, as it were, subordinating himself to the scene-painter, the costumier, and the stage-manager. Upon the stage idyls are apt to wear a very artificial air, and "Olivia" is at first so sedulously simple, so elaborately pastoral both in theme and treatment, the personages occupying the scene are so uncommonly moral and righteous, that a certain feeling of oppression is engendered, and the audience seem indeed for a time to be breathing the over-heated atmosphere of a Sunday-school. It is almost with a sense of relief, after the village children have sung a hymn and departed, that discovery is made of the presence of wickedness upon the scene in the person of young *Squire Thornhill*, for now at any rate virtue is supplied with a contrast, and what is even of more importance, distinct promise is made of dramatic interest. And this promise Mr. Wills, happily, is able to fulfil. Discarding the misadventures of Moses at the fair, and the pranks of Lady Blarney and Miss Skeggs, and withholding all mention of Mr. Ephraim Jenkinson and his transgressions, the dramatist confines himself to the elopement of *Olivia*, the

perfidy of the *Squire*, and the sufferings in such wise inflicted upon *Dr. Primrose* and his family. Only occasional use is made of the dialogue of the novel; but the play is throughout tastefully and carefully written, often with a felicitous imitation of the literary manner of the last century, while the lapses into the colloquial forms of to-day are not numerous. And it may be noted that Mr. Wills gains his chief successes in the scenes which are rather of his own devising than directly supplied by the original. The pathos of *Olivia's* departure from home has been thoroughly appreciated and expressed by the dramatist, while the later scene of the *Squire's* confession of his villany is treated with genuine power, and yet with a forbearance that is at this point the best proof of skill in dramatic composition. In the last act Mr. Wills's adroitness is less marked. The converse of the *Vicar* and *Olivia* wants truth and relevancy, and the strains of sorrow, so to speak, are disturbed too suddenly and noisily by notes of comic music. It is too late in the play for attempts to portray the *Vicar's* humours as a preacher or a controversialist, while *Olivia's* mood at the moment of her return to the home she had disgraced would scarcely incline towards merriment. In the case of *Mr. Burchell* and *Sophia*, the course of true love runs too smoothly to be very interesting, and on the stage the lovers are found to be too prosaic, staid, and sensible to move much sympathy. More gratification is afforded by a suggestion of the possible mating in the future of *Moses*, the *Vicar's* son, with *Polly*, the little daughter of *Farmer Flamborough*. Mr. Wills has been fortunate, not merely in his performers, but also in his manager. Mr. Hare demonstrates anew that he has elevated theatrical decoration to the rank of a fine art; indeed, his painstaking and outlay in placing the play upon the stage justify suspicion that it was produced almost as much for its pictorial as for its dramatic merits. In either case, advantage has been taken of the opportunity to present a special reflection of the artistic aspects of the last century with regard to furniture and costumes, china and glass, &c. A sort of devout care has been expended upon the veriest minutiae of upholstery and ironmongery; a fond ingenuity is apparent

in every direction of the scene ; and the foibles and fancies of those who love, or imagine that they love, cuckoo-clocks, brass fenders, carved oak, blue-and-white crockery, and such matters, have been very liberally considered and catered for. Prettier pictures have not, indeed, been seen upon the stage than are afforded by the Primrose family, their friends and neighbours, goods and chattels, and general surroundings, in this play of "*Olivia*." But a higher claim to distinction arises from the method of its representation. In the hands of Miss Ellen Terry *Olivia* becomes a character of rare dramatic value, more nearly allied, perhaps, to the *Clarissa* of Richardson than to the heroine of Goldsmith. The actress's singular command of pathetic expression obtains further manifestation. The scene of *Olivia's* farewell to her family, all unconscious of the impending blow her flight is to inflict upon them, is curiously affecting in its subtle and subdued tenderness ; while her indignation and remorse upon discovering the perfidy of *Thornhill* are rendered with a vehemence of emotion and tragic passion such as the modern theatre has seldom exhibited. Only an artist of distinct genius could have ventured upon the impulsive abrupt movements by means of which she thrusts from her the villain who has betrayed her, and denotes the intensity of her scorn of him, the completeness of her change from loving to loathing. Miss Terry is not less successful in the quieter passages of the drama, while her graces of aspect and manner enable her to appear as *Olivia* even to the full satisfaction of those most prepossessed concerning the personal charms of that heroine,—so beloved of painters and illustrators,—to whom have been dedicated so many acres of canvas, so many square feet of boxwood. As *Dr. Primrose* Mr. Hermann Vezin displays the intellectual force, the sense of character, the refinement of feeling, which have made him famous as an actor ; it is solely due to the dramatist that the Vicar is deprived of the shrewd humour which was his distinguishing property when he left the hands of Dr. Goldsmith. In the character of *Squire Thornhill* Mr. Terriss wins, as he deserves, considerable applause ; the actor, who is new to the Court Theatre, exhibits intelligence, self-control, and ease of manner under

circumstances of a trying kind. To make such a confession as *Thornhill's*, and yet to save the character from becoming wholly repulsive, involved a task of some difficulty. Mr. Terriss proved himself equal to the occasion, and a notable addition to Mr. Hare's company.

CXVI.

"ELFINELLA."

[Princess's Theatre.—June 1878.]

"ELFINELLA," the new play by Ross Neil—whether Mr., Mrs., or Miss, the programme reveals not—is a graceful and poetic work, but deficient in dramatic purport and interest. Fairy plays of necessity appeal rather to the fancy than to the feelings; they deal with subjects that stand apart from general experience; they disconcert sympathy in their avoidance of the "deeds and language such as men do use," the human follies and the crimes constituting the legitimate themes of tragedy and comedy. The story of "Elfinella" may be said to be descended from Fouqué's "Undine," a typical production, in which the supernatural is employed with curious art, and a sense of poetic mystery is impressively conveyed. But such fables acquire in the theatre a force and crudeness of outline, a solidity of substance, that are of disenchanting effect; it is hardly for the players indeed to venture upon rivalry with the poet in giving shape to things unknown and a local habitation and a name to airy nothings. Hazlitt has pointed out the disagreements existing between poetry and the stage, and the failure of all attempts to reconcile them. "The ideal has no place upon the stage. . . . That which is merely an airy shape, a dream, a passing thought, immediately becomes an unmanageable reality. . . . Fancy cannot be represented any more than a simile can be painted." Fairies may always people the realms of the imagination; but they forthwith forfeit their magic when materialised into conventional ballet-girls, in customary suits of muslin and

fleshings, with rouged cheeks and whitened arms, paste-board wings and sandal shoon of satin.

"Elfinella" is in four acts; the story is set forth after rather a wire-drawn fashion; certain of the scenes proceed languidly, and provoke considerable weariness. The heroine is supposed to be hesitating between mortality and immortality. In her infancy, *Elfinella* had been stolen and adopted by the fairies. Arrived at womanhood, she is permitted to return for a while to a state of mortal existence. In the world, if she finds much to loathe, she discovers something to love; and finally she elects to abandon fairy-land absolutely, and to remain among her human kindred, sharing their pleasures and their pains, and with them marrying and giving in marriage, growing old and dying in due course. The relief of humour is provided by the characters of *Hans*, a henpecked peasant, and his shrewish but affectionate wife, *Lisa*, the sister of *Elfinella*. *Waldmar*, the nephew of *Hans*, becomes the lover of the heroine. The scene is laid in Switzerland, and, with a preciseness unusual in fairy tales, the autumn of 1315 is fixed upon as the date of the occurrences of the drama. But the struggles of the Swiss against Austrian invasion and oppression lend historic circumstance to the natural and supernatural adventures of *Elfinella*. The play is written in adroit blank-verse, and abounds in passages of poetic quality; the literary value of the work, indeed, is not for a moment to be gainsaid. In this respect "Elfinella" takes precedence of all recent productions upon the stage. The author has yet to acquire, however, the discretion of a practised playwright in regard both to choice and manipulation of subject. "Elfinella" suffers from its length and its monotony; the want of movement and action is seriously felt; the scenes follow and resemble each other too closely; there is excess of dwelling upon one idea, of harping upon one string; certain of the speeches and conversations are severe taxes upon patience and powers of endurance.

From the performers the play scarcely received justice; but the difficulties attendant upon its representation were certainly great. At the present period of her career, Miss Heath is not well advised to essay such characters as

Elfinella. The actress brings to the impersonation much cultivated but unconcealed art, a studied picturesqueness of mien, and an elaborate series of postures and gestures, sinuous swimming movements, woven paces, and waving hands ; but regard for nature is omitted from her histrionic method ; and with Mrs. Skewton we may ask for "less conventionality and freer play of soul. We are so dreadfully artificial !" Mr. Rignold is perhaps needlessly boisterous as *Hans*, but there is some comedy in his performance ; Miss Drummond plays *Lisa* with excellent spirit. Mr. C. Warner is competent to represent such a character as *Waldmar* the lover ; but the actor indulges in explosions of emphasis and a breathless ecstasy of manner which tend towards extravagance. Generally it may be said that the performers would benefit by the study of elocution and the art of reciting blank-verse. "*Elfinella*" has been liberally furnished with musical and scenic accessories and embellishments.

CXVII.

"VANDERDECKEN."

[Lyceum Theatre.—June 1878.]

MR. FITZBALL'S old Adelphi melodrama, "The Flying Dutchman," begot in due season "Der Fliegende Holländer ;" and now Herr Wagner's opera has engendered "Vanderdecken," a new poetic drama in four acts, written by Messrs. Fitzgerald and Wills. These dramatists profess to have based their play upon the old legend of the Flying Dutchman. It should be recognised, however, that they stand much indebted to modern dealings with the subject, and notably to Herr Wagner's libretto. The story of the wicked sea-captain who, in the face of a gale of wind, swore that he would double the Cape of Good Hope though he beat about until doomsday, may be traced back to the fifteenth or sixteenth century. It is to Heine we owe the fine invention, which Herr Wagner quickly pressed into the service of his score, of releasing

the accursed Dutchman from his fate by means of the love of a woman "faithful unto death," willing to sacrifice her life to save his soul. There was no suggestion of this in the Adelphi play: a thing of horror and blue fire, produced in rivalry of the fables of "Frankenstein" and "Der Freischutz." Fitzball's Vanderdecken was a grim spectre, the thrall of the Evil Principle, and bound at intervals to find a wife among mortals by way of increasing the number of his victims. Certainly the drama did not end with the salvation of its hero. Some attempt to relieve the doom of the Dutchman was made by Captain Marryat, when he founded a novel upon the fable, and resorted to the religious magic of a certain sacred amulet or relic to bring Vanderdecken's wanderings to a comfortable end. It was in Fitzball's play, however, as staunch Wagnerians are willing to admit, that the famous composer discovered the prosaic germs of his grand poetic and musical ideas.

The Dutchman of Messrs. Fitzgerald and Wills is in the main the Dutchman of Heine and Wagner: a Salathiel of the sea, cursed with eternal life, permitted to quit his flying ship with the blood-red sails but once in every seven years in quest of a bride who shall prove herself a paragon of affection and fidelity. He meets with hospitality at the hands of a Norwegian—a Scotchman, according to Heine—whose daughter, from long brooding over his story and his portrait, which by a strange chance hangs in her chamber, is predisposed to surrender herself to the mysterious stranger. Although affianced to another—he is called *Eric*, a forester, in the opera; he appears as *Olof*, a sailor, in the Lyceum play—she does not hesitate to abandon her betrothed and her home, and ultimately to yield up her life, so that her weird suitor, the Flying Dutchman, may be saved. While faithful to this ground-plan, however, the English playwrights have much elaborated the superstructure. Their drama, indeed, suffers from the redundancy of their exertions and the sophisticated air they have given to a subject which gained force from its simplicity. The early scenes are effective enough. The first act is a kind of prologue; *Vanderdecken* does not appear, but the legend of his curse is told both in prose and verse, while by means of a

magic-lantern a vision of the phantom ship is exhibited in the background. The entrance of *Vanderdecken* in the second act is impressively contrived, and his interviews with *Nils*, the Norwegian pilot, and his daughter *Thekla*, if of undue length and unskilfully interrupted by a shifting of the scenes, yet sustain the mystery and poetic gravity of the story. It must be said, however, that the drama weakens as it proceeds, and is much overburdened with words. Mr. Fitzball was not a cultivated writer, but he was skilled in the production of stage effects; he was careful not to cheapen his *Vanderdecken* by allowing him to appear too often or to say too much. But the Lyceum *Vanderdecken* rarely quits the stage, and talks interminably. The supernatural attributes with which he at first seemed clothed fall from him one by one; his solemn speeches weary by their monotony and protraction; he becomes too familiar a figure upon the scene, and sinks finally into a very commonplace and mortal creature indeed, bandying vulgar abuse with *Olof*, *Thekla's* ill-used lover, and even fighting with him a broadsword and dagger combat of a thoroughly conventional pattern. After this condescension on the part of the immortal Dutchman, it is not so very surprising to find him worsted in the encounter, and even thrown into the sea for dead. He revives, of course, so that the play may end, as the opera ends, with the self-sacrifice of the Norwegian maiden; but Messrs. Fitzgerald and Wills bring about their catastrophe after a tame and tedious fashion, injudiciously defer the fall of the curtain, and nearly wreck their play upon the rocks of an anti-climax.

"*Vanderdecken*" is unequally written; now the *dramatis personæ* are content with the flattest prose, and now they express themselves in blank verse of rather tumid character. A desire to be poetic and declamatory at all costs affects injuriously the later scenes, and renders the play often gravely oppressive. *Vanderdecken's* descriptions of the countries he has seen, his experiences in tropic and arctic regions, assume the form of high-flown lectures, such as might accompany a moving panorama at the Polytechnic Institution; and *Thekla's* love seems less voluntarily bestowed than borne away from her by an impetuous torrent

of words. To the last it is doubtful how far *Vanderdecken's* suit is to be regarded as sincere; for of course his escape from his fearful doom is of more moment to him than the love or the life of *Thekla*. The sombre play was received with some applause, but it was plain that the audience were not wholly satisfied. As *Vanderdecken* Mr. Irving exerts himself to the utmost; his performance is remarkable for its picturesque intensity, its power of self-control, and passionate oratory: the part, however, is not, in truth, worthy of so fine an actor.

CXVIII.

"THE WINTER'S TALE."

[Drury Lane Theatre.—October 1878.]

MR. CHATTERTON has re-opened Drury Lane Theatre with a performance of "The Winter's Tale," hoping, perhaps, he may find reason to reverse his former decision to the effect that "Shakspeare spelt ruin." Mr. Charles Kean's arrangement of the text has been followed, and some attempt has been made to imitate the scenic splendours and illusions of the grand revival of the play at the Princess's in 1856. The allegorical exhibition of the Flight of Time, with *Luna* in her car and *Phæbus* in his chariot, has not been attempted; but a grand Pyrrhic dance is introduced in the first act, and an uproarious Dionysiac festival occurs in the fourth. The trial of *Hermione* takes place in the theatre at Syracuse, and Bithynia is throughout substituted for Bohemia, pursuant to the suggestion of Sir Thomas Hanmer in 1744, and the example set by Garrick in 1756. The bear that should eat *Antigonus* does not appear at Drury Lane, however; at the Princess's, it may be remembered, this animal figured conspicuously, chasing the *Antigonus* of the time—the late John Cooper—with peculiar zest: Mr. Charles Kean carefully justifying the existence of bears in Asia Minor by a quotation from the second chapter of the Second Book of Kings! But certainly the representation

at Drury Lane, if it may not altogether compare with Mr. Kean's revival—the result of profuse expenditure, exceeding painstaking, and an almost crazy fondness for archæological accuracy—is as complete in regard to stage decorations and musical embellishments as a general audience could possibly desire. Several new scenes have been painted, the costumes are very brilliant, and the dancers and supernumeraries crowd the stage. So far, indeed, “The Winter's Tale” has not before been so liberally equipped by any Drury Lane manager, even when account has been taken of the production of the play by Macready in 1842, and by Mr. James Anderson in 1850. The present performance, however, is gravely deficient in histrionic aptitude and intellectuality; the more poetic passages of the drama fail to impress as they should, and would in the hands of competent interpreters. It becomes plain, indeed, that the possibilities of representing Shakspeare upon the stage weaken and fade as the players grow less and less accustomed to appearance in imaginative works, and the portrayal of the more heroic emotions. The Drury Lane company is of some strength, includes performers of very respectable ability; yet the representation often flagged, lost force and spirit; the actors found their task so strange, or were without confidence in themselves, their efforts, or their audience. There were some exceptions: Mrs. Vezin's *Paulina* was entirely admirable, genuinely vehement and intense, the text being delivered with the voluble promptness of one who knows her Shakspeare well, and is skilled and fertile in histrionic illustration of the poet; there were touches of true art also in the *Old Shepherd* of Mr. Cowper and the *Clown* of Mr. Calhaem; while elocutionary accomplishment was to be found in the *Polixenes* of Mr. Edgar and the *Antigonus* of Mr. Ryder, who, by the by, was Mr. Kean's *Polixenes* in 1856. Mr. Dillon's *Leontes* is but a conventional performance, however; vigorous and energetic in its way, yet void of incisiveness and of that sympathetic quality and nervous excitability by means of which subtler tragedians have made the groundless jealousy of *King Leontes* seem credible and even rational, moving their audiences sharply and deeply. Miss Fowler is weak and uninteresting as *Perdita*. Mr. Atkins is a hard, dull,

and ungenial *Autolycus*—what a jovial rogue was the *Autolycus* of Harley!—while Miss Wallis as *Hermione* is most unsatisfactory. Possessed of certain qualifications for theatrical success, the lady wearies by her redundant artifices of gesture and attitude, by her stilted manner, and the drawling pompousness of her elocution; regard for simplicity and nature seems wholly banished from her method of representation; in her hands *Hermione* loses all matronly grace and dignity, assuming instead the semblance of a tight-laced hysterical schoolgirl. As *Florizel* Mr. Edward Compton makes a first appearance of some promise; possibly, however, the actor's *forte* may be found to lie in other than the Shakspearean drama. "The Winter's Tale" was received with the boisterous enthusiasm usually forthcoming on the opening night of Drury Lane Theatre, and probably the revival will interest many who are curious concerning the representation of Shakspeare upon the stage. The play has not undergone performance in London for more than twenty years; such another period may elapse before "The Winter's Tale" again finds its way back to the theatre.

CXX.

"THE CRISIS."

[Haymarket Theatre.—December 1878.]

IN his comedy of "Les Fourchambault" M. Augier has dealt with the vice of calumny, a popular theme upon the French stage ever since Don Bazile's famous discourse in the "Barbier de Seville;" and, further, following the example set by M. Alexandre Dumas in his "Fils Naturel," has exhibited, the better to condemn, the sins of certain fathers against their unlawful children. M. Augier is nothing if not didactic; he is witty and eloquent; the stage is to him something of a pulpit, and he finds in Paris attentive and admiring audiences of his moral essays by reason of the striking illustrations that accompany them. In the interest of virtue he portrays vice, and the public

applauds because it likes the picture. He is of those authors who delight in what is called "laying bare the sores of social life," and he gathers round him an eager crowd, careless about his ideas of healing and reform, but discovering unhealthy delight in the shocking spectacle he sets before them. "*Les Fourchambault*" was received with extraordinary favour in April last upon its first production at the Théâtre Français; the success of the play being due to its own merits, dramatic and literary, with allowance, of course, for the excellence of the actors concerned in its representation. In these times of translation and adaptation, it was clear that sooner or later an attempt would be made to present "*Les Fourchambault*" upon the English stage. Mr. Albery has boldly taken the matter in hand, and produced "*The Crisis*."

It may be said at once that "*The Crisis*" is by no means a comfortable or an agreeable sort of play. Mr. Albery has been guilty of the sin by which adapters have usually fallen: he has altered too much, not merely with reference to the susceptibilities of the original author or the integrity of his work—things of trivial import to adapters on all occasions—but in regard to the drama's prospects of success. In compliance with the silly superstition that English audiences will only interest themselves about English persons, he has laboured to denationalise the work: he has simply denaturalised it. The scene is transferred to London and the characters bear English names; the "*Fourchambaults*" are now the "*Denhams*," and so on. But if it can be said that M. Augier's creations have in this wise ceased to be French, they certainly have not become English. In the first act, the best of Mr. Albery's version, all goes well enough. The story is opened with genuine dramatic art, and a sufficient measure of interest is generated. Nothing happens that might not reasonably be supposed to happen in an English household of the rich middle class. A tone of comedy is fairly preserved; the dialogue is bright and lively, with only intermittent declinings towards the drollery of farce. But in the second act we are in another world; we have crossed the threshold of melodrama, and scent Kotzebue in the air. The sorrowing mother enters, all tears and black lace,

pallid cheeks and grey curls, sensibility and false sentiment. She is constrained to make confession to her robust middle-aged son, effusively affectionate, of the sins and sufferings of forty years ago. He is illegitimate; she had married, but informally; his father, influenced by calumnies concerning her, had refused to validate his union with her; had indeed wholly abandoned her and her infant to the mercy of the world. Nevertheless, this base-born son, ignorant of his mother's shame, has prospered in business, has realised a handsome fortune, lives with her affluently in a house well provided with black and gold, blue and white modern-antique adornments. But now there is a panic or crisis in the City. The putative father is on the verge of bankruptcy. The feelings of his victim towards him, however, are still of the tenderest description, the long years of cruel neglect she has undergone notwithstanding. She persuades her son, who has little will of his own, to advance an enormous sum to save the credit of the father he has never seen, and concerning whose welfare he can scarcely be expected to care very much. Respectable City men of the present day do not usually give away vast amounts after this easy fashion; but in the present instance the son's sacrifice seems less due to an overstrained sense of duty than to a weak desire to gratify a fond but excessively emotional mother. This scene did not secure the complete sympathy of the audience, but did not seriously offend them—it may be doubted whether they quite clearly apprehended its significance; but later passages in the comedy relating to M. Augier's other victim of calumny—an exemplary young lady, who in the midst of a family circle is bluntly accused of leading a vicious life—provoked the angry expostulations of the house. Mr. Albery had rather aggravated the unpleasant nature of the original incident, and certainly it needed very delicate handling. In the last act the illegitimate and the legitimate son are seen in conflict, the one striking the other a severe blow in the face; the audience indeed have reason to be thankful that they are spared a like scene between father and son. It may be argued, of course, that the stage is not limited merely to the mirroring of grateful matters; but there is a question of art involved in the attempt to discuss before

a mixed audience certain topics of morality and decency. So far as the play aims at gratifying by shocking, it may be said to succeed, with an understanding that there are many tedious scenes both in the French and English versions: the strained motives influencing the characters, and the artificial distresses afflicting them, are often very trying to patience. M. Augier's dialogue has been interlarded with jokes of Mr. Albery's own contriving; these are sometimes amusing enough, if a little strained and far-fetched in their facetiousness. The more serious speeches are apt to be wordy and pompous, their unreality contrasting forcibly with the prosaic quality of the general dialogue.

In Mrs. John Wood's hands, *Mrs. Denham*, otherwise *Madame Fourchambault*, becomes a most energetic and entertaining person, quaint of speech as of mien; gravity indeed is out of the question when she is present upon the scene, for the lady seems somehow to have escaped from a farce of the broadest pattern. This is not due simply to the actress's natural vivacity and exceeding sense of humour: Mr. Albery has charged her with the delivery of lines expressly designed to tickle the gallery. Miss Eastlake needs more sobriety of demeanour, but she represents with much grace and intelligence the maligned *Miss Burnside*. Mr. Kelly is portentously solemn as the illegitimate son; Miss Moodie plays pathetically the difficult part of his tearful mother. Mr. Fisher, junior, is seen to some advantage as *Lord William Whitehead*, whom the bill describes as a Radical, the play making no disclosure of his political opinions. Other characters are creditably personated by Mr. Howe and Miss Buckstone, and by Mr. Terriss, who is unduly inclined, however, to melodramatic exaggerations of tone and gesture.

CXXI.

"HAMLET."

[Lyceum Theatre.—January 1879.]

MR. IRVING'S managerial career has commenced most auspiciously. The opening representation was, indeed, from first to last simply triumphant. A distinguished audience filled to overflowing the redecorated Lyceum Theatre, and the new *impresario* was received with unbounded enthusiasm. These gratifying evidences of goodwill were scarcely required, however, to convince Mr. Irving that his enterprise carried with it very general sympathy. His proved devotion to his art, his determination to uphold the national drama to his utmost, have secured for him the suffrages of all classes of society. And it is recognised that he has become a manager, not to enhance his position as an actor—for already he stands in the front rank of his profession—but the better to promote the interests of the whole stage, and to serve more fully, to gratify more absolutely, the public, his patrons. Let it be added as a minor matter, that he has followed the good examples set by Mr. Hollingshead and Mrs. Bancroft, and has been careful of the comfort of the audience, neither permitting them to be pinched for room, nor subjecting them to those petty imposts which, like so many turn-pike dues, have so persistently impeded the visitor on his passage from the street to his seat within the theatre.

The tragedy of "Hamlet" was well chosen for the first performance under the new management: as *Hamlet* Mr. Irving has obtained his greatest success. It has been said that no actor has ever been known to fail as *Hamlet*; it may be added that no actor has ever as *Hamlet* completely satisfied critical opinion. To many the play is a metaphysical study wholly unsuited for theatrical exhibition: "an enigmatic work," as Schlegel says, "resembling those irrational equations in which a fraction of unknown magnitude always remains that will in no way admit of solution." To many *Hamlet* is a mysterious and complex character,

beyond the power of histrionic art adequately to interpret Mr. Irving can at any rate point to the fact that, four years ago, for two hundred nights in succession he played *Hamlet* to delighted crowds at the Lyceum. Weighed against popular success so consummate and prodigious, objections of whatever kind are but as feathers in the scale; and even those least disposed to accept this latest stage-portraiture of *Hamlet* can afford to admit that the picture is in itself consistent and harmonious, the work of an ingenious and intellectual artist. Mr. Irving's *Hamlet* is very much now what it was in 1874; the colouring somewhat sobered perhaps, with here and there further elaboration of detail. There have been more princely *Hamlets* and more passionate; for it is not given to Mr. Irving to be graceful, and his physical means limit his expression of fury or frenzy; his voice lacks sonority, is usually, indeed, rather flat in tone, and he has to practise what Lamb called "politic savings and fetches of the breath, husbandry of the lungs," to induce his light tenor organ to perform baritone duties. For this reason he is more effective in colloquy than in soliloquy; his longer passages are without the music of sustained elocution, and to secure variety of tone he seems compelled to resort to incoherences of speech, and rapid changes of key, as it were, high falsetto alternating with notes of bass quality. His *Hamlet* is less intolerant of *Polonius* than formerly, if still exceedingly splenetic with *Rosencrantz* and *Guildestern*; proceeding even to brutal violence in the scene of his destroying the inoffensive recorder borrowed from the musicians simply to illustrate his censure of his friends—the student *Hamlet* would surely have treated more tenderly the little instrument of art. In modern regard, however, *Hamlet* is not the amiable character he was once deemed. Schlegel dissented from Goethe's too favourable judgment of him; and a later critic has laboured to show that *Hamlet* was wholly unworthy of admiration or sympathy, that he "basely and persistently shirked his duty, and made mean subterfuges to excuse himself." But with these opinions theatrical audiences have not much concerned themselves. The *Hamlet* of the stage retains his popularity in right of the opportunities for display he

affords his impersonator; and perhaps also in right of his youth and picturesqueness, his inky cloak and black silk stockings. In like manner, according to Macaulay, Charles I. obtained a larger share of compassion than was strictly his due because of "his Vandyke dress, his handsome face, and his peaked beard."

Mr. Irving always interests and succeeds in impressing, for he is an original actor; he has invented a histrionic method of his own, and he brings to his every performance, not merely stage adroitness of a special sort, but much refined intelligence. The restlessness of expression and gesture which seems natural to him, or not perfectly controllable, is of real service in representing *Hamlet's* exacerbated nervous condition, which the visitation of his father's spirit inflames and intensifies almost to madness; for in Mr. Irving's *Hamlet* it is to be noted that a simulated insanity keeps pace with, and yet is distinct from a mental excitement near akin to absolute disease of brain. At the suggestion, possibly, of the late G. H. Lewes, certain passages usually suppressed of *Hamlet's* semi-jocose converse with the *Ghost* "in the cellarage" at the close of the first act have been restored to the stage. The gain is not very apparent, however, and curtailment being absolutely necessary, this portion of the play could better have been spared than some others: for instance, *Hamlet's* interview with *Claudius* in the fourth act. The total exclusion of *Hamlet* from the fourth act is, indeed, a grave defect in the acting version of the play adopted at the Lyceum. Mr. Irving's best successes are obtained in his difficult scenes with *Ophelia*, and, presently, with the *Queen*. Here with subtle art he suggests the presence of an extreme tenderness beneath the veil of all his bitterness and vehemence. With the *Players* he is familiar almost to flippancy, while permitting himself to be unduly indignant at the harmless foppery of *Osric*. His modes of pronunciation and elocution Mr. Irving cannot now, perhaps, be expected to amend; genius makes laws for itself, and its aberrations must be tolerated; otherwise it might be worth while to inquire, among other matters, why Mr. Irving's *Hamlet*, meditating the murder of *Claudius* at his prayers, waves about a lighted torch within a few feet of him, as though

expressly to rouse him to a sense of his peril, as a danger-signal warns a coming train of a possible accident? Or why, in his duel with *Laertes*, *Hamlet* is cumbered with a bonnet and Mephistophelian plumes of a caricature kind? Or why, bidding good-night to his mother, *Hamlet* so involves himself with the chamber candlesticks? It may be thought, perhaps, that the scene thus becomes more real; but these details tend to vulgarise poetic tragedy, which should occupy ground removed from the trivialities and the homeliness of ordinary life. Moreover, such small effects and artifices of stage management may oftentimes deserve censure fully as much as the interpolations of the clowns, and for the same reason, that they divert attention from its proper object, and are apt to set on barren spectators to laugh when some necessary question of the play has to be considered. While *Hamlet* is so busy with torch or candle, Shakspeare is forgotten in the thought that misadventure of an incendiary sort may possibly occur upon the stage with serious consequences.

From Miss Ellen Terry Mr. Irving receives invaluable support. An *Ophelia* so tender, so graceful, so picturesque, and so pathetic has not been seen in the theatre since Macready's *Hamlet* many years ago found his *Ophelia* in the person of Miss Priscilla Horton. In characters of this class, the heroines of genuine poetry, Miss Terry is now without a rival, is indeed unapproached by any other actress upon our stage. Her personal graces and endowments, her elocutionary skill, her musical speech, and, above all, her singular power of depicting intensity of feeling, are most happily combined, as the audience were quick to discover and applaud in this very exquisite presentment of *Ophelia*. In other regards the performance is creditable to Mr. Irving's company, albeit Mr. Forrester seems not well suited as *Claudius*, and Mr. Swinbourne is scarcely comfortable as *Horatio*; perhaps the actors might change places with a more satisfactory result. Mr. Cooper is an energetic *Laertes*; Mr. Kyrle Bellew a vivacious *Osric*; and the ungrateful characters of *Rosencrantz* and *Guildestern* find unusually efficient representatives.

CXXII.

"THE LADY OF LYONS."

[Lyceum Theatre.—April 1879.]

"THE LADY OF LYONS" is now more than forty years old, and has undergone a good deal of wear and tear; it has been sharply criticised, even rudely ridiculed, and the players have done their best and their worst with it; still the work retains its place upon the stage, and almost all its old power to amuse and interest an audience. It is now represented "with a difference," however. Mr. Bulwer—the author was then untitled—wrote for a large theatre, and for performers aiming at an exalted and heroic histrionic method, priding themselves upon their declamatory powers, their displays of emotion and passion, with due regard for the customs and conventions of the stage. They imitated Nature, not with the minute literalness of workers in terra-cotta, but after the bold, broad, and sublimating manner of a sculptor engaged upon a marble statue. At the Lyceum a general effort seems to have been made to bring "The Lady of Lyons" more into the domain of reality and common life, to tame its fervour and clip its poetic wings. The play has not hitherto been presented with so subdued an air; the performers for the most part appear to have subjected themselves to a severe process of self-repression. An artistic spirit has ruled the stage arrangements and decorations; the author has been credited with a desire, of which he was perhaps wholly innocent, to depict accurately the aspect of social life in France under the Directory. The costumes and furniture of that period have accordingly been reproduced with singular accuracy, but with an admirable regard, nevertheless, for the tasteful and the picturesque. More adroit and attractive scenic illusions than are presented by the drawing-room and gardens of *M. Deschappelles's* house at Lyons have not occupied the stage. Mr. Irving has properly restored the first scene, which Mr. Fechter, careful rather of the stage interests of *Claude Melnotte* than of the

character of *Pauline Deschappelles*, ventured to excise. Mr. Irving has been less judicious, however, in suppressing the performance of the "Marseillaise," which has usually enhanced the animation of the scene concluding the fourth act.

To the part of *Claude Melnotte* Mr. Irving brings great painstaking and special energy, but the performance may not be counted among his successes. The lack of youthfulness of manner is injuriously felt, and the long poetic passages fail in their effect from the actor's unmusical delivery; too often he seemed to be preaching, and not preaching well. It may be that Mr. Irving is too much habituated to portray the more saturnine sentiments and emotions for satisfactory rendering of *Claude Melnotte's* love, folly, and sin. Of excitement of tone, gesture, and mien there was no deficiency; indeed, the actor's anxiety to be emphatic sometimes betrayed him into extravagance. In this way his *Claude* seemed a greater and baser delinquent than he has usually been represented; and his criminality certainly gained in intensity by contrast with the singular delicacy and refinement of Miss Ellen Terry's *Pauline*, who really points the moral of the play when she demands—

"What was the slight of a poor powerless girl
To the deep wrong of this most vile revenge?"

But there have been *Paulines* not fairly describable as poor or powerless, but almost vixenish in their attributes, repaying their lover's perjury with infinite scorn, and uttering very fierce tirades in reply to his rather long-winded explanations. With curious art Miss Terry passes over the artificial quality of *Pauline's* harangues, and lays stress on her more amiable characteristics—shows that her pride is rather matter of education than of nature—that she is in truth tender, gentle, trusting, loving, and altogether womanly. To some, no doubt, the part will seem underplayed, particularly with reference to the intentions of the author and the traditions of representation. Miss Terry's performance, however, takes high rank among contemporary efforts, in right of its poetic sensibility, its girlish grace, its simplicity, its subtlety, its exquisite elocution, and that surprising picturesqueness of aspect, pose, and

movement which seem to be the peculiar and exclusive possession of the actress. The costumes of the Directory period Miss Terry invests with an artistic elegance which scarcely belongs to them as a matter of right. Mr. Walter Lacy quits his well-earned retirement to appear as *General Damas*, and presents in sober colours a finished portrait of that popular officer. The veteran actor was received by his audience with the heartiest applause. The other characters are efficiently supported by Mr. Forrester and Mr. Bellew, Mrs. Chippendale and Miss Pauncefort. The representation moved the audience to a great exhibition of enthusiasm.

CXXIII.

"THE BEAUX' STRATAGEM."

[Imperial Theatre.—October 1879.]

SOME time since Mr. Boucicault, avowing his faith in the sufficiency of the living drama, protested against the reproduction of departed plays. "I no more desire," he wrote, "to see the defunct dramatist occupying the stage than I wish to see my grandfather rise out of his respected tomb and reclaim my inheritance." But of course Mr. Boucicault's sentiments upon this subject are peculiar to himself. It is not every one who is in a position to regard the public stage exactly as his own private property. For my part, I perceive no reason why an old play should not be now and then taken down from the shelf, dusted and aired, with a view to its fitness for representation being fairly considered. And it becomes almost necessary to have recourse to defunct dramatists when living playwrights so steadily diminish or exhibit such decidedly inferior capacity. There are occasions when dead lions may really be preferred to living dogs, notwithstanding the proverb to the contrary. I looked therefore with some interest to the promised revival of "The Beaux' Stratagem" at the Imperial, better known as the Aquarium Theatre. I cannot

say, however, that the representation afforded me unmeasured gratification.†

Comedies are but a perishable class of goods: like wines, they may be kept too long, to the loss of sparkle, flavour, body, and colour. They picture manners and times which vary and vanish; they retain at last only an antiquarian sort of interest. In Queen Anne's reign and long afterwards, Farquhar's play enjoyed great popularity; its wit and humour were thoroughly appreciated, and what was of more importance, the spectators recognised in its characters spirited portraits of the men and women of the period. Such gallants as *Aimwell* and *Archer* could be seen any day in Covent Garden; *Mrs. Sullen* and *Dorinda* were constantly visible on the Mall or in the Ring; *Sullen* and *Scrub*, *Gibbet* and *Boniface*, were thoroughly commonplace persons, living within the radius of everybody's experience. Of course all attractiveness of this sort has now gone from the comedy; to modern playgoers the characters in "The Beaux' Stratagem" are almost as antediluvian animals, strange, extinct, monstrous. Nor do our modern players possess the power of revivifying these types of the past. Traditions of manner are not counted as of much value in the theatre of to-day; yet the successful performance of such plays as this of Farquhar's almost depends upon the preservation of tradition. I suppose that something of the manner of Wilks, the original *Archer*, survived in Garrick's performance of the part, and was afterwards handed down to Charles Kemble. Clearly it should be the business of the players to reproduce as closely as possible the characters as Farquhar conceived them, and to reflect in some measure the high animal spirits reputed to distinguish that dramatist above his contemporaries. I must say that I found certain of the performers at the Imperial Theatre very low-spirited indeed. The dreariness of Mr. Edgar's *Aimwell* was kept in countenance, however, by the depressing quality of Miss Meyrick's *Dorinda*.

The text has been revised, the old coarseness expunged, and there is nothing now to offend in the play, unless it be the "gags" and additional jokes which have been interpolated by an unknown authority: Farquhar's humour

should have sufficed. The representation dragged somewhat, and I suspect was found wearisome by many; the truth being perhaps that the story is stated after rather a rambling and incoherent fashion, and that much time and space seem devoted to the episodic characters of the landlord, the highwayman, and the Irish-French priest *Foigard*, who are now all without the pale of sympathy, and scarcely intelligible to modern spectators. Queen Anne-ism being so much in vogue, I thought perhaps the revival had been decided upon as a means of illustrating that foible upon the stage; but I was mistaken. There has been liberal expenditure in equipping the play for performance; accuracy of detail, however, has not been much studied, either by scene-painter or costumier. The interior of Boniface's inn is very picturesquely treated; but the gallery in *Lady Bountiful's* house, with a picture by Greuze over the mantelpiece, has a very unlikely look. The costumes for the most part pertain to the time of George III. The most successful impersonation of the night was Mrs. Stirling's *Lady Bountiful*—strictly natural, while extremely comical. Mr. Farren's *Archer* lacks the graces of youth, perhaps, but is abundantly animated. Mr. Lionel Brough succeeds as *Scrub*, in spite of an over-anxiety to be droll. As *Mrs. Sullen* Miss Litton is very charming of aspect; but the actress, I think, lacks force and breadth of manner for the due presentment of this character, which was first sustained by Mrs. Oldfield. Miss Litton succeeds better as a *soubrette* than as a *grande coquette*. *Cherry* was prettily played by Miss Carlotta Addison; Mr. Ryder was equal to the part of *Sullen*. Revivals of "The Beaux' Stratagem" will probably be few and far between; those who are curious concerning the work may therefore be advised to go and see it represented at the Imperial Theatre. As the auctioneers say, "Such an opportunity is not likely to occur again."

CXXIV.

"DUTY."

[Prince of Wales's Theatre.—October 1879]

POPE held Farquhar's dialogue to be "pert and low." What would Pope have thought of certain of the jokes, puns, and puerilities which Mr. Albery has plentifully sprinkled over "Duty:" his adaptation of "*Les Bourgeois de Pont-Arcy*"? Mr. Albery, however, must not be judged merely by his defects; he has written some excellent dialogue—brisk, bright, and witty—and has obviously spared no pains to render "Duty" acceptable to the audiences of Tottenham Street. But what a play, viewed as a reflection of English life, manners, and character! For the *venue* of M. Sardou's story has been changed according to the adapter's custom; the *dramatis personæ* are called by English names, and are supposed to take part in events happening upon English soil. When "*Les Bourgeois de Pont-Arcy*" was first produced in Paris, a French wit proposed that the play should be named either "*Les Précautions inutiles et les Craintes sans Objet*," or "*Les Raffinements d'une Délicatesse exagérée*." These ridiculous titles point to the fundamental weakness of M. Sardou's story; it is as a house built upon the sands, or with the dry-rot in its timbers. The incidents depend for their existence upon an imaginary difficulty, an artificial distress. Of a husband's falsities and failings comic use has often been made; M. Sardou would turn these to tragical account. A country gentleman, dying, leaves behind him, not merely a lawful widow and her son, but also his mistress, a betrayed woman with an illegitimate child. The discovery of this fact might reasonably be supposed to sadden or even to shock the respectable relatives of the late lamented, but certainly would not justify the convulsional and frenetic proceedings in which M. Sardou's characters indulge. But the widow is one of those saintly insipid mothers of whom French dramatists are so fond; she is a hothouse flower, and the winds of heaven must not visit her face too roughly: the truth must never be told her lest it

should wound her delicate ears ; a mature woman, she must always be treated like a child in a nursery. Such a fragile invertebrate creature is recognised as credible in France ; but as I know her, the British matron, the female Bull, as the late Nathaniel Hawthorne politely called her, is made of sterner stuff. Yet Mr. Albery ascribes to an English woman the imbecilities of M. Sardou's French mother. The son conceives it to be his simple and strict duty to take upon himself his father's sins, and thus to prevent all shock to his mother's feelings ; he therefore avows himself the seducer of his father's victim, and the father of his father's child ! As a result, he is compelled to resign the love of his affianced bride ; he becomes an object of reproach and scandal to the cathedral-town society in which he moves, and he has to endure the bitter upbraidings of his absurd mother. The situation becomes indeed an outrage upon the dignities and the decencies of English domestic life, when the mother is found imploring and even commanding her son to take to wife his father's mistress, and assume to be the parent of his illegitimate half-brother ! Of course the lady has to learn the truth at last, as she might have learnt it at first ; for the proper person to inform her, her brother, a sensible and kind-hearted gentleman enough, has been present by her side throughout the play. Humorous characters of a familiar pattern are introduced to give the relief of comedy, and even of farce, to these scenes of tragedy ; but altogether M. Sardou's drama, as interpreted by Mr. Albery, strikes me as the most disagreeable stage-production of recent times. There is even a failure of M. Sardou's customary ingenuity in the conduct of the story. When the interview between the son and the mistress is suddenly interrupted, it is impossible to believe that each would leave exposed bank-notes and compromising letters as evidence of their compact ; and the situation that ensues is a sacrifice of all probability to the necessities of plot.

The players seemed oppressed by the insincerity of their occupation, and scarcely able to emerge from conventionality. Mrs. Vezin's personation of the mother was much applauded ; but the actress's pathos is apt to sink into peevishness, and I confess I find something wearisome about the rather whining cadences of her elocution. Mr.

Cecil was admirable as the brother; and Mr. Conway, having conquered the nervousness which at first beset him, displayed genuine art in his representation of the super-sentimental son, who cruelly abandons his bride to spare his mother a pang. Miss Marion Terry, who appeared as the *ingénue*, I thought very graceful and charming in almost the only natural scene in the play, her reconciliation with her lover. Mrs. John Wood, charged with a very highly coloured part, played it in a highly coloured fashion. For breadth of humour and pungency of expression Mrs. Wood has no rival upon the stage; I always find her acting most entertaining; and yet I fear her presence in "Duty" was as a discordant note, or as the enlivenment of a dirge by means of a comic song. I congratulate Miss Dietz upon her skilful performance of the trying part of *Marcelle Aubry*, the *modiste* who has to relate the story of her own fall from the paths of virtue. Other parts in the play are very well played by Mr. Kemble, Mr. Forbes Robertson, and Mr. David Fisher, junior.

CXXV.

"THE IRON CHEST."

[Lyceum Theatre.—October 1879.]

"THE IRON CHEST" of George Colman the Younger is an old-fashioned play, but it contains certain effective scenes, and offers good opportunities to an actor of tragedy. I need not recount how, from the combined effects of asthma, opium, ill-temper, and obstinacy, John Kemble failed in the leading character upon the first performance of the play in 1796, and how very furious George Colman waxed upon the occasion. All that is now ancient history; it has since been demonstrated over and over again that in competent hands *Sir Edward Mortimer* is an interesting and impressive character, and that audiences are apt to be much stirred by the events and situations in which he figures. I do not think Macready ever assumed the part; at any rate, I find him,

in his Diary, denouncing the play, expressing himself "disgusted with the patches of sentiment and claptraps upon national privileges, humanity, and all the other virtues in which George Colman was so rich—on paper." Otherwise *Sir Edward Mortimer* has been personated by all our players of eminence in turn. I remember seeing "The Iron Chest" some five-and-twenty years ago, the hero being represented by Mr. Charles Kean, who probably followed, if at some distance and with unequal steps, his father's method of performing the part. The playgoers of that time were more tolerant, I think, than are our audiences of today of obvious stage-tricks and effects in the way of starts and whispers, stamping and strutting, fretting and fuming, spouting, and what I must even call spluttering. They accepted these artifices and expedients as among the proper conditions of histrionic performance; and notwithstanding, or it may even be because of, these things, they allowed themselves to be greatly excited. As I recollect, "The Iron Chest" was received with enthusiasm, and the efforts of Mr. Charles Kean rewarded with the heartiest applause. The play is chiefly defective in regard to its incoherence; the incidents are all detached or semi-detached. Colman seems to have been in doubt as to whether he would the most depend for success upon the music of Storace, the drolleries of Dodd and Suett, or the tragic airs of Kemble. The scenes devoted to *Sir Edward Mortimer* and his story have the remotest connection with the scenes occupied by the *Rawbold* family; while between that depressing household and the band of robbers who receive the boy *Wilford* so hospitably the relationship is very hard to discover. The consistency of the drama is only preserved by viewing *Wilford* as the common friend or acquaintance of *Sir Edward*, the *Rawbolds*, and the robbers respectively. Of course Goodwin's novel of "Caleb Williams" lies at the foundation of "The Iron Chest," and the infirmities of Colman's play result from his attempts to deal dramatically with an undramatic subject. The attractions of the novel were found in its graduality of development and the incessant movement of the scenes in which Caleb is hunted from place to place by Falkland; and these are just the qualities which cannot be adequately reflected upon the

stage. Nowadays "Caleb Williams" is more admired than read; critics have long contented themselves with handing down an unexamined tradition of its surpassing merits—De Quincey being excepted, however; for he did not hesitate to laugh the book to scorn. I confess that when I last looked into "Caleb Williams," I thought it dull and disappointing, after allowance had been made for the originality and the striking nature of its theme. It is written in a rude, crude style, and abounds in absurdly stilted descriptions of scenery, unnatural characters, and most artificial pictures of society. However, we are much less concerned now with "Caleb Williams" than with "The Iron Chest." Hazlitt pronounced Colman's serious writing in the play to be "natural and flowing," and "in some measure an imitation of Shakspeare." The description seems to me certainly too flattering. But Colman's speeches are often eloquent enough, if they incline to verbosity; they are the conventional efforts of a skilled playwright contriving occasions for declamation. Sincerity, perhaps, is lacking throughout the play, with genuine poetic force, depth, and feeling. But the blank verse may be fairly said to be as good or as bad as the late Lord Lytton's.

Altogether Mr. Irving was quite justified, I think, in producing this play at the Lyceum Theatre. Preceding tragedians had bestowed a reputation upon it; and no doubt it occurred to him that, in his turn, he could do something with the character of *Mortimer*. He had, indeed, served a sort of apprenticeship to the part by his achievements as *Mathias*, as *Eugene Aram*, and as *Philip* in Mr. Aïd's play. He is an adept in depicting remorse; while, unlike that fabled artist who could only portray red lions—they might be larger or they might be smaller, but they must be red lions—he has demonstrated also his power of illustrating wide and varying ranges of passion and character. It seems to me that his *Mortimer* may rank quite among his best performances, in right of its artistic completeness, its picturesqueness, its intensity, and its moderation. In none of his characters has he exhibited more thorough control of himself and of his art, keeping voice and gesture well in subjection, repressing habits or tricks of manner, and yet retaining in full his wonted power to impress, to awe,

and to excite. Bringing the costumes of the play nearer to modern times—this has not been accomplished, however, without some tampering with Colman's text; a small matter, perhaps—he has also modernised the method of impersonation; so that *Sir Edward Mortimer*, becoming more like a gentleman of the eighteenth century than he has appeared on former occasions, pertains more to nature and reality, less to fiction and the stage, than has been his wont hitherto. Some of the old traditional points and effects, swift transitions and grand explosions, may have been missing; but I do not know that they were much missed. Mr. Irving's *Sir Edward Mortimer* commands attention and interest from his first discovery upon the scene, the impression strengthening and deepening as the play proceeds; the actor's early forbearance and repose enhancing by the force of contrast his absolute self-abandonment when the climax of the story is reached, and the situation permits, and even demands, a display of a most vehement and frantic sort. Mr. Irving found adequate support in the *Lady Helen* of Miss Florence Terry, the *Fitzharding* of Mr. Barnes, and the *Adam Winterton* of Mr. Carter, performances which were all agreeable and intelligent if they attained no higher level; while elements of old-established low comedy were discoverable in the *Samson Rawbold* of Mr. Johnson. Perhaps *Wilford* should have been supported by an actor of more experience than Mr. Forbes can at present boast; he took evident pains with the part, but his manner is awkward and monotonous, and he is curiously epicene of aspect; I think, too, the skirts of his coat might advantageously be lengthened. I have no doubt, however, that Mr. Forbes will improve when his profession has become less strange to him than it seems to be at present.

CXXVI.

"RESCUED."

[Adelphi Theatre.—October 1879.]

GODWIN, describing the origin and birth of his "Caleb Williams," stated that for some two or three weeks he was employed in jotting down hints for the work before he was engaged seriously in its composition; that in this way he began with his third volume, then proceeded to the second, and finally grappled with the first. I conceive that Mr. Boucicault must adopt a similar plan when he concocts his "new and original sensational domestic dramas"—such as "Rescued," for instance. He probably devises an exciting incident for his third act, and then occupies himself with dovetailing to it earlier and later scenes; the success of the drama depending upon the strength of its exciting incident. In the third act of "Rescued" a toy railway train rattles over a toy viaduct; the villain of the story is supposed to have endangered the safety of the train in order that death may result to a child, the rightful heir to vast estates, who is understood to be travelling in one of the carriages. In my eyes the scene had rather the effect of a puppet-show or of a clockwork exhibition; it was purely mechanical, a matter of wires and pasteboard, paint and canvas; I could find in it no human or dramatic interest. And even those who permitted themselves to be thrilled by this sort of nursery spectacle must have felt that it was scarcely led up to or followed with the author's usual ingenuity. I know that Mr. Boucicault only plans by such works as this to please the meaner capacities; but he is so careful not to aim over the heads of his audience, that sometimes, I think, he aims too low, and merely hits the ground. "Rescued" will not take its place beside "After Dark" and the "Streets of London." The story is feeble and confused, overburdened too with episodic matter: a commonplace romance of the established *London Journal* pattern. The characters are merely old dolls with new names: the reduced nobleman, the persistent

detective, the honest working man, the shrewd lawyer, the hardened villain, the virtuous heroine, so proud, that she would rather do her own washing than accept a pension from the Crown—these reappear, saying and doing very much what they have said and done in many previous plays. The Adelphi audience, however, seem rather to have outgrown such productions as "Rescued;" and they accorded an unflattering reception to the new drama, interrupting it occasionally by their expressions of dissatisfaction. An unusually strong company has been engaged to appear in "Rescued;" but with weak characters even strong companies avail not. Indeed, the presence of so many admired players upon the stage had rather the effect of dividing and distributing the interest of the story, which, being of a meagre quality, needed husbanding and focussing as much as possible. The freshest portion of the play dealt with the fortune of *Biddy*, a blind woman, and *Midge*, her daughter, who personates, during her leisure hours, her own long-lost twin-brother; but the main object of the play is not served by these means. I waited patiently for the wit and humour which usually illumine Mr. Boucicault's writings; there was a faint sparkle now and then in the dialogue, but it did not endure; it soon departed, it may be to look after the inventiveness and dramatic tact also characteristic of the author, but also absent from his present play. Of the performers I need only say that, quite with their usual ability, Mr. Vezin represented the villain, a welcher, pretending to be a Russian count; Mr. Henry Neville, an energetic working man; Mr. J. G. Taylor, a comic pointsman; Mr. Pateman, a lawyer; and Mr. Fernandez, an Irish detective. Miss Pateman personated the aristocratic heroine who does her own washing, *Lady Sybil Ferrers*; Miss Foote, the heroine of humble life, who pretends to be a boy and eventually marries the comic pointsman.

CXXVII.

"THE MERCHANT OF VENICE."

[Lyceum Theatre.—November 1879.]

AN actor who has appeared with applause as *Hamlet* and *Othello*, *Macbeth* and *Richard*, must feel almost constrained to essay the character of *Shylock*. In times past, of course, *Shylock* was handed over to the low comedians to do their worst with; and Shakspeare's words, more or less, were delivered by the old-fashioned Jew of the streets, three-hatted, carrying an old-clothesman's bag, and afflicted with the guttural accents of Houndsditch. This absurdity was expelled the stage by Macklin in the first instance, whose example was followed, after intervals, by Cooke and Kean; so that *Shylock* now comes before us essentially a tragic character. It had seemed to me, from the time of Mr. Irving's first experiments with the Shakspearean repertory, that, in the part of *Shylock*, he would find peculiar opportunities for the employment of his art; his power as an actor greatly consisting in the portrayal of definite character and special individuality as opposed to the more abstract and ideal creations. His best successes, to my thinking, have arisen from his presentment of strong personalities in which the prosaic element has prevailed over the poetic. His *Richard* I have always accounted his most complete achievement, and I am now much disposed to rank his *Shylock* with his *Richard*. No doubt *Shylock*, as a stage figure, has long worn the impress of Edmund Kean's genius; but there is a sort of natural Statute of Limitations in regard to histrionic traditions and prescriptions; and the lapse of nearly half a century has a good deal blunted, so to say, Kean's points, and rendered nugatory the old conventions of performance. Mr. Irving's *Shylock*, I may say at once, is not the *Shylock* of the patent theatres; nor must the violence of tone, the fierceness of gesture, the explosions of passion, so long associated with the part, be looked for at the Lyceum. I have known *Shylocks* who have seemed from first to last in a frenzy of malignancy, whose every

speech had a certain detonating quality, and with whom ranting and raving were as close and continuous habits of life; and I must own that very cordial applause was wont to wait upon those excesses of representation. It is not only that Mr. Irving has not sufficient physical force for such clamorous exhibitions, but his conception and treatment of the character are altogether more subdued. He plays in a minor key, as it were; sufferance appears genuinely the badge of his tribe; long oppression and the custom of submission have tamed and cowed him until intolerable wrong blows the grey ashes of his wrath red-hot again; he is veritably "*old Shylock*," as he describes himself and as the *Doge* addresses him: the years weigh upon him, he is infirm of gait, his face manifests the furrows of care and the pallors of sickness; and if he has stinted *Launcelot Gobbo*, his servant, in the matter of food, he has not been more liberal to himself. Mr. Irving is always picturesque. His *Shylock* is carefully arrayed, if without the traditional red cap which Venetian law compelled the Jews to wear, and by no means fails in artistic qualities of expression, line, and colour. The performance is altogether consistent and harmonious, and displays anew that power of self-control which has come to Mr. Irving this season as a fresh possession. Every temptation to extravagance or eccentricity of action was resolutely resisted, and with the happiest results. I never saw a *Shylock* that obtained more commiseration from the audience; for usually, I think, *Shylock* is so robustly vindictive and energetically defiant, as to compel the spectators to withhold from him their sympathies. But Mr. Irving's *Shylock*, old, haggard, halting, sordid, represents the dignity and intellect of the play; beside him, the Christians, for all their graces of aspect and gallantry of apparel, seem but poor creatures. His hatred of them finds justification in his race and his religion, and in the fact that they, his mental inferiors, are his tyrants; and when he is plundered by them alike of his child and his gold, his detestation turns naturally not so much to blind fury as to a deadly purpose of revenge. There is something grandly pathetic in the fixed calm of the Jew as he stands in the judgment-hall, a figure of Fate inexorably persistent, demanding the penalty of his bond; he is no

mere usurer punishing a bankrupt debtor ; if he avenges private injuries, he also represents a nation seeking atonement for centuries of wrong. By what a technical quibble is he denied justice, and tricked out of both penalty and principal ! What a pitiful cur is *Gratiano* to yelp at his heels ! One's sympathies follow the baffled and persecuted Jew as he slowly withdraws from the court ; it is impossible to feel much interest in the release from peril of that very dull personage *Antonio*.

This was Mr. Irving's best scene, as it is of course the climax of the play. In the earlier passages he seemed bent, I thought, upon varying his tones too frequently, dropping into a colloquial manner too suddenly ; while his interview with *Tubal* suffered somewhat from an accidental failure of memory on the part of his playfellow. But the representation was upon the whole singularly complete ; the success of Mr. Irving's new venture was, indeed, never questionable for a moment. I regret, however, that his acting edition of the play has not dispensed with much scene-shifting which now oppresses and delays the performance ; in this respect the arrangements of Mr. Charles Kean in 1858 and of Mr. Bancroft in 1875 were more to be admired. For modifications of this kind to suit the conditions of modern performance are, I hold, quite permissible. Shakspeare changed his scenes so often because there were, in fact, no scenes to change ; much stage-management was then effected by the imagination of the spectators, whose thoughts "pieced out" the imperfections of the performance. "The Merchant of Venice" is one of the least compact of Shakspeare's works ; *Shylock*, the most prominent character, disappears at the end of the fourth act ; and the two plots—the caskets and the "merry bond"—are very slightly connected : *Shylock* and *Portia* only meeting in the trial scene. Mr. Bancroft, I remember, contrived very happily to pack the Belmont scenes closely together ; and Mr. Kean's second act required no change of scene—the "exterior of *Shylock's* house" sufficed throughout. Mr. Irving, retaining the *Prince of Morocco*, has dismissed the *Prince of Arragon* from the cast : both these suitors, however, appeared alike at the Princess's and at the Prince of Wales's Theatre. Happily the *Portia* of 1875—who rendered memorable a revival that was other-

wise rather ill-starred, for all the taste and refinement of its scenic decorations—Miss Ellen Terry, lends her invaluable assistance to Mr. Irving at the Lyceum; and a more admirable *Portia* there could scarcely be. Nervous at first, and weighed down possibly by the difficulty of equalling herself and of renewing her former triumph, the lady played uncertainly, and at times with some insufficiency of force; but as the drama proceeded her courage increased and her genius asserted itself. Radiantly beautiful in her Venetian robes of gold-coloured brocaded satin, with the look of a picture by Giorgione, her emotional acting in the casket-scene with *Bassanio*; her spirited resolve, confided to *Nerissa*, to prove "the prettier fellow of the two;" her exquisite management of the most melodious of voices in the trial before the *Doge*; the high comedy of the last act—these left nothing to be desired, and obtained, as they deserved, the most enthusiastic applause. *Antonio* and *Gratiano* were but weakly interpreted; Mr. Johnson proved an acceptable *Launcelot*, versed in the humours of the part; and there was decided merit in the stalwart mien and natural feeling of Mr. Barnes's *Bassanio*. Miss Alma Murray appeared as *Jessica*, and Miss Florence Terry as *Nerissa*, both actresses finding favour with the audience. The new scenes by Mr. Hawes Craven and others are excellently artistic, and the costumes and furniture very handsome and appropriate.

CXXVIII.

"KING HENRY V."

[Drury Lane Theatre.—November 1879.]

SHAKSPEARE'S "King Henry V.," considered as a stage-play, is an unsatisfactory work; so much, I think, may safely be said even with deference to that literary fashion, comparatively modern as to its origin, which at all costs encourages idolatry of the poet, and ascribes to him something very like infallibility. As Mr. Furnival has it, "a siege and a battle, with one bit of light love-making, cannot

form a drama, whatever amount of rhetorical patriotic speeches and comic relief are introduced: *Henry V.* is all the play; no one else is really shown except *Fluellen*." A large number—some thirty-five—of the *dramatis personæ* may be dismissed as the merest sketches or shadows, so far as their theatrical effectiveness is concerned. *Falstaff's* followers without *Falstaff* seem bereft of much of their power to entertain; even *Ancient Pistol*, whose humours were probably of a very potent sort in past times, appearing now as a most obsolete and extinct creature; while the absence of a heroine, or of what is called "female interest," gravely reduces the attractiveness of the play from the point of view of a general audience. Nevertheless "*Henry V.*" has enjoyed occasional terms of popularity. In the last century it was valued, now because of the patriotic and anti-Gallican tone of its oratory, and now because of the opportunity it afforded for mimicking the spectacle of George III.'s coronation. Macready made the play the subject of a "grand revival" at Covent Garden in 1839, and his example was followed in due season by Mr. Phelps at Sadler's Wells, and Mr. Charles Kean at the Princess's. It is one of the misfortunes attending upon these "grand revivals" that they render the public dissatisfied with simpler performances of the poet: after he has appeared in a spangled suit, he can scarcely resume his homely working clothes; and thus there arises some correspondence between a "grand revival" and a "splendid funeral." The decline of dramatic poetry has been dated from the introduction of scenery upon the stage, and the finest descriptive passages of the Elizabethan poets have been attributed to the fact that the theatre of their time was entirely deficient in the matter of painted canvas. It is some years since Hallam wrote that "the prodigality of our stage in its peculiar boast, scene-painting, can hardly keep pace with the creative powers of Shakspeare; it is well that he did not live when a manager was to estimate his descriptions by the cost of realising them on canvas, or we might never have stood with *Lear* on the cliffs of Dover, or amidst the palaces of Venice with *Shylock* and *Antonio*." As a matter of fact, the modern Shakspearean revivalist rejoices in every opportunity of embellishing the poet by

employing the scene-painter and spreading as much canvas as possible; an excuse for yet another new picture, the more elaborate the better, is heartily welcomed. Macready has chronicled his delight at perceiving that he could even illustrate the speeches of the *Chorus* in "Henry V." by means of the panoramic paintings of Stanfield.

The version of "King Henry V." now produced at Drury Lane appears to be identical with the arrangement of the text prepared by the late Mr. Charles Calvert for performance at Manchester in 1872; Mr. Calvert afterwards visiting New York to supervise the representation of the play at Booth's Theatre in 1875. Mr. George Rignold, who personates the *King* at Drury Lane, I remember as a promising and energetic young actor at the Court and Queen's Theatres some seven or eight years ago; he played, among other parts, and with success, *Caliban* and *Leonatus Posthumus*. He possesses special physical qualifications for such a character as *Henry V.* Edwin Forrest, appearing in a modern tragedy, "The Gladiator," by Dr. Bird of New York, was required to say at a particular juncture of the story, "I am here to fight!" From his tone and manner and the prodigious muscularity of his movements as he uttered those words, it was unanimously agreed that he was very certainly the man to make good his speech. Something of the kind might be said of Mr. George Rignold. He is most heroically pugnacious of aspect; he looks a born leader of fighting men; he exhibits indefatigable vigour alike as swordsman and orator; he overwhelms his foes both by force of arms and strength of lungs. As, falchion in hand, clothed in complete steel, with a richly emblazoned tabard, he stands in that spot so prized by the histrionic mind, the exact centre of the stage, the limelight pouring upon him from the flies its most dazzling rays, and declaims speech after speech to his devoted followers, he presents as striking a stage figure as I think I ever saw. The actor has gained both in force and in confidence during his absence in the United States, and he has remedied certain of the old defects in his elocutionary system, although in this respect there is still something to be desired. When he attempts great rapidity of utterance he is apt to become unintelligible; for his voice is strong

and sonorous rather than flexible, and a "gabbling" effect in this wise mars certain of his best speeches. He is prone, too, to overlong pauses in the midst of his interlocutions; insomuch that the audience was sometimes tempted to think that his memory has suddenly betrayed him, while the prompter had strayed from his post. Mr. Rignold, however, rouses the house to great enthusiasm; his performance of *Henry* was received with extraordinary applause. Of course subtlety of interpretation was not required; *Henry V.* is not an intellectual character; on the stage it is sufficient if he is represented as chivalrous of bearing, manly of form, and sound of wind and limb. I need not trouble myself, therefore, with considering how Mr. Rignold may fare should he attempt the more exacting of the Shakespearean characters. In support of the actor the playbill asserts that 400 auxiliaries are employed; I cannot believe that there are quite so many. Drury Lane is rich in scenery suitable to the legitimate drama, and in costumes, armour, and weapons of a mediæval pattern; the play is presented, therefore, quite in the manner of a "grand revival," if not absolutely with fresh appliances. The speeches of the *Chorus* are well declaimed by Miss Bra-brook Henderson; the actress, I think, bore another name when she last appeared in London. Of the other performers I have little to say; but Mr. Calhaem's *Fluellen* and Mr. Odell's *Pistol*, the *Williams* of Mr. Ryder and the *Boy* of Master Grattan, may be mentioned as commendable efforts.

CXXIX.

"THE FALCON."

[St. James's Theatre.—December 1879.]

IN the case of the Laureate's contribution to the stage, some disappointment was perhaps inevitable. The mere announcement of a new work by Mr. Tennyson is sufficient to rouse expectation to an almost unreasonable extent, and the fact was overlooked that "The Falcon" only purported to be a production of slender proportions.

It proves to be a dramatic study something after the manner of Alfred de Musset. The French poet, however, usually invented his fables, while Mr. Tennyson has borrowed his subject from Boccaccio. De Musset's plays were hardly designed for representation, and the literary fashion which brought them into favour and prominence has waned considerably of late years ; but a certain ardent suggestiveness, a feverish abandonment, distinguished De Musset's writings, and almost compensated for his lack of dramatic expertness. Mr. Tennyson's Muse, apparently, has no natural inclining towards the theatre, and approaches the footlights at the risk of singeing her wings. Altogether I think "The Falcon" should have been withheld from representation. It is tender and graceful, and, if it ventures upon few poetic flights, it is rich in the dainty phrases and the felicities of diction for which the Laureate has always been renowned ; but it is not dramatic ; it moves little interest ; it stands apart from general sympathy. The fault, perhaps, lies as much in the theme as in the treatment. Upon the stage something of grotesqueness is inseparable from the sacrifice of *Federigo's* pet bird ; and when the poet has killed and cooked the falcon, he is in haste to shirk the unpalatable dish, and does not even permit his *dramatis personæ* to taste a morsel of it. In Boccaccio's simpler version of the story, *Monna Giovanni* and the lady who accompanies her to *Federigo's* cottage calmly sit down to table and eat the falcon, "not knowing what it was." Animal life is perhaps more mercifully regarded in these times than once it was ; it seemed to me that the audience were more disposed to sorrow over the death of the bird than to rejoice at the union of the lovers. At any rate, there was a reality about *Federigo's* falcon which did not always extend to *Federigo* and his mistress. They were picturesque of aspect, elegant of attitude, choice of speech, but seemed sometimes deficient in those touches of nature which are understood to make the whole world kin. Mr. and Mrs. Kendal played the lovers with exceeding care and skill, if they failed to sound any specially pathetic note, and left their audience at last comparatively cold. But they delivered their lines most intelligently, were adroit in conducting their scenes while avoiding the conventionalisms of

stage effect; clearly they had not spared painstaking and study. Mr. Kendal sings a plaintive ditty, playing an accompaniment upon the guitar. Mrs. Kendal, clad like the morning in a mantle of golden russet, is most winsome of presence. "The Falcon" may find no abiding place upon the stage; but the poetic little sketch should be seen by all who concern themselves as to theatrical transactions, or can take interest in a dramatic experiment which hardly aims at success of a very general or unbounded sort. By and by it may be decided that "The Falcon" can be better enjoyed in the quiet of the library than upon the stage of the St. James's Theatre, with all its refined means and æsthetic appliances.

CXXX.

"THE OLD LOVE AND THE NEW."

[Court Theatre.—December 1870.]

ONE of the most familiar figures of fiction, whether of the theatre or of the circulating library, is the embarrassed father, who, to avert impending bankruptcy, implores or commands his daughter to dismiss the poor lover she adores, and to accept in his stead the rich suitor she abominates. In "The Lady of Lyons" this oppressive parent is called M. Deschappelles; in "The Old Love and the New" he bears the name of Mr. Westbrook. If Pauline had married M. Beauseant, and a child had been born of their union, and if afterwards Claude Melnotte had appeared troublesomely devoted to the young wife and mother, what would have happened? How would poetic justice have dealt with him? Well, in some sort Mr. Bronson Howard's play, successful in America as "The Banker's Daughter," and produced at the Court Theatre with Mr. Albery's revisions and corrections as "The Old Love and the New," may be held to furnish a reply to these inquiries. Claude would have been killed in a duel, say, by M. Glavis; and M. and Madame Beauseant and their child would have

lived happily ever afterwards. Mr. Howard's play has been received with exceptional favour, and, upon the whole, the welcome accorded it was fairly deserved, for in performance it proved to be a better play than has been presented in London for some time past, although that is not saying so very much for it. One of the most amusing of the *dramatis personæ* is a young lady, who, having married a very old husband, looks forward eagerly to becoming, at an early period, his widow and the inheritrix of his enormous wealth. Her state of expectation might seem heartless and repellent to bystanders; but inconvenience of that kind is obviated by the very good looks, the natural humour, and great vivacity of the actress who personates the character. Miss Winifred Emery had previously appeared with credit in the little play called "A Clerical Error," but of course she was then permitted but a poor opportunity of exhibiting her best gifts and graces. As *Mrs. Brown*, the wife, and presently the widow, of a millionaire of seventy-five, Miss Emery obtains real distinction, and proves herself worthy of the name she bears, whether it comes to her by act of others or of her own. Apart from this *Brown* episode, as it may be called, there is little that is new in Mr. Howard's play; but he has studied the modern drama to some purpose; apparently he has sat at many theatrical feasts, and come away laden with scraps. There is awkwardness in his management of the dinner-party in his second act; the characters are arbitrarily compelled to march from the stage in Indian file, so that occasion may be made for the interview of the wife and her lover. The dialogue is often too diffuse, and the story seems sometimes to loiter on its way; but altogether the author has made effective use of his materials, and has supplied the players with valuable opportunities.

Miss Amy Roselle is more successful, I think, in comic than in serious dramas,—“The Old Love and the New” pertaining to what Dryden describes as “that inferior sort of tragedies which end with a prosperous event,”—but she plays Mr. Howard's heroine with considerable force; while as the husband, Mr. Coghlan, by his skill in representing passion controlled by a strong will, proves himself anew one of the most accomplished actors of the day. Mr. Leathes

is a trifle too mysterious and Mephistophelian, indulges in an excess of broken English as the *Count of Carojac*; and Mr. David Fisher, an admirable actor of jaunty old age, is not very well suited as the selfish bankrupt who forces his daughter into a distasteful alliance. Mr. Anson is very spirited and comical as an American commercial traveller; and Mr. Dacre acquits himself creditably as the discomfited lover. The representation was much assisted by the cleverness of Miss Georgie White, a tiny actress of six, who personates the offspring of the marriage "without love," and is mainly instrumental in bringing the story to a happy end.

CXXXI.

"THE LORD OF THE MANOR."

[Imperial Theatre.—January 1880.]

MR. HERMAN MERIVALE is a cultivated man of letters, boasting skill and experience in the art of writing for the stage: his performances are undoubtedly entitled to respectful consideration. But I think his judgment was at fault when he essayed to dramatise the "*Wilhelm Meister*;" for one thing, it was so much easier not to dramatise the "*Wilhelm Meister*." There probably exist German plays founded upon the novel, and the libretto of the French opera by M. Ambroise Thomas has become a familiar work. I conceive, however, that Mr. Merivale has not sought assistance from these sources, but has independently laboured to accomplish a task he need never have undertaken. Certain stories seemed forced upon the stage as a consequence of the prodigious popularity they enjoy, and without regard to their unfitness for theatrical uses; but from an English point of view the "*Wilhelm Meister*" is not a work of this class. In England the book has been rather admired than read: the general public having calmly allowed the raptures of Carlyle to "pair" with the scorn of De Quincey, who pronounced the impression left upon him by the novel to be one of "entire disgust." But even

those who profess enthusiasm about the work must own that they prize it much more for its philosophy, or its pseudo-philosophy, than for its fiction. As a story, it is admitted to be dull, tedious, incoherent, undramatic. Carlyle himself is constrained to own that, to the great mass of novel-readers—who, after all, are the most important judges of a novel—"Wilhelm Meister" must appear beyond endurance weary, flat, stale, and unprofitable; without romantic interest, heroic sentiments, moving incidents, or palpable characters; and possessing for its hero "a milksop, whom, with all his gifts, it takes an effort to avoid despising."

Mr. Merivale has bestowed upon his play the ill-chosen title of "The Lord of the Manor." The scene is transferred to England, the characters have become English, and the events of the story are supposed to occur some time in the last century. *Wilhelm* appears as *Wilfred Lisle*; *Mignon* as *Sybil*; the old *Harper* as *Crazy Dick*; *Laertes* as *Horatio*, and *Philina* as *Aurora*. The drama is chiefly occupied with the passages of the original which relate the adventures of *Mignon*. A prosperous conclusion is arrived at: the convenient discovery being made that *Sybil* is the long-lost daughter of an Italian marquis, and her life is preserved that she may become the wife of *Wilfred Lisle*. Apparently the dramatist has been much perplexed by a sense of "divided duty:" with one hand he endeavours to preserve Goethe; with the other he labours to suppress him. Now he aims at fidelity to his original; now he seeks to sever all connection with it. Of course the more ethereal and poetic qualities of the novel cannot be retained in the play. How, for instance, could the heroine be presented upon the stage—*Mignon*, "the daughter of enthusiasm, rapture, passion, and despair; of the earth, but not earthly?" In the theatre Goethe is necessarily depoetised; the story is stripped of its fervour and exaltation, its analytical disquisitions and allegorical significance. What remains is trite enough and without interest. "The Lord of the Manor" is a prosaic drama; its characters are unsympathetic and somewhat incomprehensible. There are certain powerful scenes; and the dialogue, though assuredly weak when it would be comical,

is for the most part very well written. There is little in the play to rouse and sustain attention, however; it is curiously deficient in dramatic quality. Moreover, Mr. Merivale has deferred too long the dispersion of the mystery attaching to *Sybil's* origin. The dramatist errs who declines to admit the audience into the secrets of his story. In the present instance, when the disclosure is made at last, there is an inclination to laugh; the effect has been discounted from having been so long held in suspense. The secret has become of the Polichinelle order: everybody knows all about it, and it is told at length to heedless ears.

I wish I could write more favourably of a play which has probably cost its author serious mental effort. I think he would have succeeded better if he had not sacrificed to the existing passion for the matter-of-fact; if he had treated his old-fashioned subject in the old-fashioned way, and, with the aid of rhythm and poetic diction, endeavoured to lift his audience out of association with everyday life, and brought them to believe in the existence of an ideal and sublimated world. He has preferred to be commonplace, however; and certainly his play was received with something like enthusiastic approbation. There was every evidence, indeed, of its most complete success. But, as I need hardly say, the enthusiasm which attends first representations is not to be implicitly trusted. The players did not spare exertion; but on the whole the author suffered at their hands. The drama needed exceptional interpretation. It was very necessary that *Aurora* should be represented by an actress of rare physical gifts—beautiful, versatile, vivacious, passionate, fascinating, capable of exercising over her audience something of the extraordinary influence she is supposed to possess over *Wilfred Lisle*, the *Wilhelm* of the drama. Such an actress was not forthcoming at the Imperial Theatre. And, truth to say, Mr. William Farren, accomplished artist as he is, served his apprenticeship too long ago to be now an acceptable personator of such a youth as *Wilhelm Meister*. Perhaps the most satisfactory performance of all was that of Mr. Kyrle Bellew as *Horatio*, the actor's inclining towards theatric attitude and restlessness of mien being well in keeping with the character. Mr. Bannister was genuinely droll in a subordinate part; and

although the *Sybil* of Miss Lydia Cowell lacked force, it possessed the merits of natural grace and picturesqueness, plaintive delivery and sympathetic manner. It was not, of course, the *Mignon* of Goethe; but it was a fairly commendable portrayal of Mr. Merivale's heroine.

CXXXII.

"NINON."

[Adelphi Theatre.—February 1880.]

MR. WILLS'S new play of "Ninon" does not set forth the adventures of the famous Ninon de l'Enclos, but deals with a story of life in Paris during the Reign of Terror, and brings upon the stage such important historic personages as the Dauphin, Marat, and Simon the cobbler. Dramas dealing with the first French Revolution follow and resemble each other a good deal: one knows that in works of the class the audience will be required to sympathise with the cause of fallen royalty, that hairbreadth escapes will abound, that at a particular crisis in the action the guillotine will be exhibited, and that throughout the play supernumeraries will be busy simulating the uproar and violence of the Parisian mob. Nevertheless the subject is not likely soon to lose its theatrical significance, or its power to excite and to fascinate both playwrights and playgoers.

Mr. Wills's hero, the *Count de St. Cyr*, is an inoffensive gentleman enough, whom a vindictive seamstress has resolved to bring to the scaffold because she believes him to be the betrayer of her sister, whose untimely death is understood to have occurred some while before the rising of the curtain. The seamstress is assisted in her vengeful plot by her father, a very violent old jeweller, and by his distinguished friend *Marat*. *Ninon*, the seamstress, dogs the footsteps of *St. Cyr*, permits him to rescue her from pretended danger in the streets, takes up her abode in his house, worms herself into his confidence to discover that

he is a royalist in disguise, tries to win of him his love, and in most unmaidenly manner makes love to him, all with the view of destroying him. Presently she becomes aware, like the lady who acts as Fouché's spy in "Plot and Passion," that she is enamoured of her victim; she learns, too, as he stands upon the brink of the grave to which she has hurried him, that *St. Cyr* is wholly innocent concerning her sister; that of the sins he is charged with, another, basely usurping his name, is really guilty. Everything points to a tragic conclusion. Mr. Wills, however, contrives to patch up matters so that the curtain may fall upon a tolerably comfortable situation. *St. Cyr's* life is spared, and the young nobleman is so incredibly foolish as to marry *Ninon*, notwithstanding the infamy of her conduct, the violent jeweller consenting; while *Marat* stands apart, if baffled, still malignant, with an air that seems to say his time will come, nevertheless; the descent of the curtain bringing about no change whatever in his sentiments.

The story is obviously defective as an appeal to commiseration. Interest is no doubt awakened; there is no lack of robustness about the materials; the spectators are kept on the alert as to what will happen next; and the action of the drama rarely comes to a halt, if it is sometimes much impeded by the "weight of words," the superabundance of dialogue, it is condemned to carry; but "*Ninon*" does not enlist sympathy. Mr. Wills has, I think, failed to see that his heroine is a very sullied sort of person, that her duplicity is most unworthy, that her calculating cruelty and deliberate baseness merit the heartiest reprobation. It may be answered that he designed his *Ninon* to be repellent and to act vilely, that what she is he from the first fully intended her to be; but in that case he assuredly risked the condemnation of his play. For a theatrical audience is much as Charles Lamb described himself, "a bundle of prejudices, made up of likings and dislikings, the veriest thrall to sympathies, apathies, antipathies;" and a heroine possessed of a clean bill of moral health is almost indispensable to dramatic prosperity. And there are other blemishes in "*Ninon*." Mr. Wills seems too often to abandon the main object of his pursuit, as it were, to hunt an episode to death. The

introduction of the *Dauphin* and the scene of *Simon's* cruelty in the Temple are scarcely necessary to the play, while the motives actuating *St. Cyr* are often difficult to understand ; his ultimate union with the seamstress being, perhaps, the least explicable of his proceedings. I think, too, that if *Marat* had determined upon the death of *St. Cyr*, he would have found a much shorter way to that result than Mr. Wills conceives him to adopt. I may further note that Mr. Wills supposes the *Dauphin* to have successfully escaped from the Temple and made his way to England ; the events of his after-life being, of course, left outside the scope of the drama.

"Ninon" is written with the author's usual force and effect, although sometimes the high-flown and the colloquial are too closely contrasted. The acting left something to be desired. Mr. Neville, perhaps, does all that can be done with the rather ungrateful character of *St. Cyr*, who throughout occupies the position of a dupe and a puppet in the hands of others ; but as *Ninon* Miss Wallis is clearly overtaxed. The actress seems bent upon displaying intensity of emotion ; but her efforts involve her in the worst of stage tricks, exaggerations of tone and posture, the ranting and raving, the moping and mowing, of a departed histrionic method. Miss Wallis's physical resources are strictly limited, and characters of great passion and vehemence are quite beyond her reach. Mr. Brooke took pains with the part of *Marat*, but did not succeed in investing it with any very strong individuality ; the actor was unfortunate, moreover, in his choice of dress. Mr. Taylor viewed *Simon* as "a part to tear a cat in ;" and Mr. Fernandez, personating the father of *Ninon*, vied with his fellow-player in feats of vociferation.

CXXXIII.

"THE UPPER CRUST."

[Folly Theatre.—April 1880.]

"THE UPPER CRUST" will rank, I think, among Mr. Byron's most entertaining works. It is true that in dramatic interest "The Upper Crust" is not especially strong, and that it makes little effort to thrill or to excite the audience. The play, however, is faithful to the traditions of its class: it "sports with human follies, not with crimes;" and it may be said to attain completely its simple end in the genuine amusement it occasions. No absolute villain figures upon the scene; a cold-hearted father, who has neglected his offspring, is the most reprehensible of the characters. No interesting forger commits, *currente calamo*, his breaches of the law; nor is the fall of the curtain preceded by the entrance of that type of modern poetical justice, the police-constable, duly provided with handcuffs. Mr. Byron is content to set forth unambitiously the struggles of a worthy and wealthy, but unlettered and ill-mannered, soapboiler to force his way from obscurity to what is known as "the upper crust" of society. A certain *Mr. Barnaby Doublechick* has made a large fortune by the manufacture and sale of "Diaphanous Soap." Why, he asks himself, should "swells" look down upon him and country families hold aloof? No doubt his desire to rise has its despicable side: he is a thorough snob in his reverence for the titled. But his aspirations are not merely on his own account; he has a daughter, a most accomplished young lady, and he is laudably anxious that her social position shall be of a distinguished sort. How he schemes, therefore, that she shall break with her own true lover, a young architect of doubtful parentage, and become the wife of a loutish sporting baronet, *Sir Robert Boobleton*; the mistakes he makes, the humiliations he incurs, and the state of rage into which he is lashed as he becomes more and more baffled and bewildered by the circumstances of the case—these constitute the materials of Mr.

Byron's new play, and keep the spectators very constantly amused. When *Mr. Doublechick's* perplexities have been thoroughly exhibited, the dramatist suddenly unties the knot of his story and discloses that the young architect in question is really the rightful heir to a barony, and therefore a more eligible husband for *Miss Doublechick* than he had originally seemed to be. Of course the convenient discovery of a rightful heir is a most familiar solution of a dramatic difficulty. Mr. Byron, however, has contrived to impart a certain freshness of aspect to this commonplace incident. But the strength of "The Upper Crust" does not lie in its story, although this has very decided merits, and is arranged for stage purposes with singular neatness and ingenuity. The comedy enables Mr. Toole to enrich with a new example his already well-stocked collection of comic and grotesque personages; and the dialogue is throughout of Mr. Byron's best. *Mr. Doublechick*, with his good-nature and his vulgarity, his affection for his child, his sense of his own importance and of the value of his money, his ludicrous ambition, his breadth of humour, his keenness of mother-wit, his explosive anger when his plans miscarry, supplies the play with extraordinary animation and diverts the audience extremely. I remember no recent work of Mr. Byron's in which the endowments and accomplishments of the actor find so much consideration and such excellent opportunity for display. Mr. Toole's efforts, I need scarcely say, are rewarded with very hearty applause. "The Upper Crust" is almost redundantly furnished with jests, witticisms, and "good things;" and these seemed to me to arise more naturally and spontaneously from the converse of the characters than has sometimes been the case with Mr. Byron's dialogue.

Mr. Doublechick is, of course, the most important person in the comedy; but the characters of *Lord Hesketh*, the impecunious nobleman who, "for a consideration," undertakes to push the soapboiler's social interests; of *Sir Robert Boobleton*, the clownish baronet, who would wed *Miss Doublechick*; and of *Walter Wrentmore*, the young architect, the mystery of whose origin is at last so comfortably dispelled, are cleverly sketched, are essential to the story, and are re-

presented with skill and artistic effect by Mr. Billington, Mr. Garden, and Mr. Ward respectively. To the merits of Mr. Ward's performance I would particularly invite attention; the young actor's agreeable presence and clear impressive delivery, refinement of manner, and admirable self-control, promise for him a professional position of genuine distinction. The ladies of the story are of minor consequence, and affect its events and progress but indirectly. However, Miss Roland Phillips, a daughter of the late Watts Phillips, draughtsman and dramatist, wins applause by the natural vivacity of her impersonation of *Miss Kate Vennimore*, *Lord Hesketh's* niece, who, as the curtain falls, exhibits willingness to pair with *Sir Robert Boobleton*. No change of scene occurs; a handsome drawing room in *Mr. Double-chick's* country-house suffices for the entire action of the comedy. In this way Mr. Byron demonstrates anew how well versed he is in the arts of dramatic construction,

CXXXIV.

"HEARTSEASE."

[Court Theatre.—May 1880.]

"HEARTSEASE," an adaptation by Mr. Mortimer of the drama of "*La Dame aux Camélias*," introduces to a London audience Madame Helena Modjeska, a lady of Polish nationality, whose histrionic efforts have acquired for her extraordinary fame in the United States. "*La Dame aux Camélias*" has long been a prohibited work in England, and even in France it was not brought upon the stage without very considerable difficulty. But what the virtuous Republican Government of 1848 refused, the less demure Second Empire hastened to concede, and accordingly M. Dumas's play was produced at the Théâtre du Vaudeville in 1852. In English eyes "*La Dame aux Camélias*" can never seem an agreeable or artistic work; it deals with a vicious subject in an insincere manner; it is unfaithful to nature, morbid, hectic, oppressed with false and sickly

sentiment. At the same time it must be admitted that M. Dumas has imported into his play certain dramatic effects of a powerful sort, and has provided the actors with opportunities for vehement emotional display. Mr. Mortimer's version does not depart in the main from the original, if in “Heartsease” some attempt is made to veil the means by which the heroine of the story obtains her living, while her relations with the hero are referred to vaguely as an “engagement.” However, if these and like small changes have satisfied the licenser, I must marvel at his former obduracy. As the libretto of “La Traviata,” M. Dumas's play was allowed performance; it might be sung, but it must not be said, because, as Mr. Donne argued, “if there is a musical version of a piece it makes a difference, for the story is then subsidiary to the music and singing.” But this judgment is now reversed, and indeed it was strange any one could ever be found seriously to maintain that music legalised a play, that songs redeemed a subject from sinfulness. After the acceptance of “La Traviata” it was clear that the appearance upon the scene, either in French or English, of “La Dame aux Camélias” could only be a question of time.

The success of Madame Modjeska in the part of *Constance*, as the heroine of “Heartsease” is called—she is *Marguerite* in the French play, and *Violetta* in the Italian opera—was great and genuine; the cordial applause rewarding her exertions was entirely deserved. The lady is an experienced actress, thoroughly versed in all the arts and devices of the stage. She might with advantage, perhaps, have visited this country at an earlier period of her career; but she is still attractive of aspect, singularly graceful of movement; she dresses with refined taste; her voice is sufficiently powerful, and managed and modulated with admirable skill, and she sustains the character she assumes with very special and subtle consistency. I really think that, since Mdle. Aimée Desclée, I have seen no actress upon the stage so expert as Madame Modjeska in strengthening and enriching her histrionic portrait-painting by means of minute touches, or so curiously practised in the personal details and individual *finesse* of the business of the scene. She has a foreigner's restlessness and variety of

gesture—that free movement of the wrists and fingers which is denied to our native players generally ; but all she does, even to her least considerable actions, seems to pertain naturally to the character she personates, and to further its exhibition and development. Her power of pathetic expression is limited, perhaps ; I have known, at any rate, far less accomplished actresses more apt to draw tears from the audience. But she has passion at command ; she can surrender herself to the nervous excitement of the scenes in which she appears ; and she is able to communicate to the spectators something of her own emotional stir and strife, and to rouse and to retain their commiseration. In the last act—devoted to the death of the heroine, and, as Little Dorrit's friend Maggie says, “almost as good as a hospital”—Madame Modjeska is to be commended for her moderation. The ghastly details in which some actresses have delighted she deals with discreetly, retrenching them as much as possible. In this last scene, indeed, her art, I think, was seen at its best, although the hysterical outbursts closing the fourth act obtained more recognition from the audience.

Altogether Madame Modjeska's performance is unquestionably interesting, and should attract many visitors to the Court Theatre. At the same time it must be understood that the representation has its drawbacks. The actress is a foreigner, and the fact is as an inharmonious note in a concert of music : her ways are not the ways of her play-fellows, who, let it be conceded, do not lack capacity ; she seems remitted to a position of isolation, because of the discrepancies between her histrionic manner and theirs. Moreover, while her English may not be described as “broken”—it is articulate enough, and she rarely misplaces an emphasis—her strong foreign accent has to be forgiven her. To my thinking, it is very hard to forgive a foreign accent in an English play upon the English stage. Our players should be among the chief custodians of the language ; we should hear from them the most perfect pronunciation, the finest elocution. I admit, however, that we do not exactly obtain this from them ; that the facts of the case are in opposition to its theories, and that the general public does not mind in the least. Nevertheless I

have noticed that the alien or exotic performer begins to pall upon the audience at an earlier period than does the native player. The foreigner does not last or continue to content nearly so long. It would be easy to cite examples if it were necessary.

CXXXV.

"THE CORSICAN BROTHERS."

[Lyceum Theatre.—September 1880.]

THE late Alexandre Dumas first told the famous story of "Les Frères Corses," if I remember rightly, in one of his *Impressions de Voyage*, books of travel which, consisting rather of fable than of fact, were generally pronounced to be far more valuable and entertaining than the writings of ordinary or of less extraordinary travellers. A contribution to *Ainsworth's Magazine* for August 1845, entitled "The Sympathy of the Twin-born"—a condensed translation of M. Dumas' narrative—perhaps first introduced MM. Fabien and Louis dei Franchi to English notice. M. Dumas professed that, while travelling in Corsica, he had been hospitably received by the *Comtesse Savilia dei Franchi* at her château in the village of Sullacaro; that in due time he became the friend of her twin-sons, learnt of the mysterious sympathy existing between them, of the love of *Louis* for the beautiful *Emilie de Lesparre*, and of the villany of *M. Château Renaud*; further, that he was present, if not as a second, at any rate as a sympathetic spectator, at the two duels of the Corsicans with the Frenchman: the duels, by the by, being fought at Vincennes with pistols, not at Fontainebleau with swords—and *Louis* being warned of danger threatening him by the spectre of his deceased *father*. This story, considerably altered, expanded, and embroidered by the playwrights, MM. Grange and Montépin, was produced in melodramatic form upon the stage of the Théâtre Historique—of which Dumas was still manager, I think—on the 10th of

August 1850. Mr. Boucicault's English edition of the drama of "Les Frères Corses" was first presented at the Princess's Theatre in February 1852. It is Mr. Boucicault's "Corsican Brothers" that Mr. Irving has now produced at the Lyceum Theatre. Many other versions of the play exist; for eight-and-twenty years ago a sort of passion possessed our London managers to present their patrons with "The Corsican Brothers" in some form or other. The subject was now treated seriously and now burlesqued, as "O Gemini, or Brothers of Course," as "The Camberwell Brothers," and even as "The Coarse-Haired Brothers!" There was talk too of an operatic "Corsican Brothers," with music by Balfe, the words by Fitzball, and the twins personated by Mr. Sims Reeves. But this project was never carried into execution. I may add that Mr. Boucicault's version was much preferred to its rivals. The adaptor's tact and skill in selection, compression, and contrivance found clear demonstration, indeed, when a literal rendering of the original play—very long, elaborate, and cumbrous, in five, six, or seven acts, I forget which—was presented at Drury Lane about 1855, for the behoof of that robustious tragedian with the deepest of voices—who perished in the wreck of the *London*, 1866, and is now nearly forgotten—Gustavus V. Brooke.

The vitality at present enjoyed by "The Corsican Brothers" seems to me entirely due to the success obtained by Charles Kean in the play, and to the fame of that success. Labouring under many physical disadvantages—plain of face, discordant of voice, inelegant of figure—Charles Kean yet owned something of the terrible earnestness of his father; he had been schooled in tragedy, and he could greatly impress his public by a certain calm, controlled, nervous intensity of manner, a measured energy of delivery, a merciless murderous inflexibility of tone and expression, which made his more melodramatic impersonations specially memorable. His audience were set shuddering, and remained spellbound, they scarcely knew how or why. When Fechter, the original representative of *Fabien* and *Louis*, undertook those characters upon the London stage, he found himself prejudged and forestalled: his many gifts and graces, his ease of bearing, his pic-

turesque aspect, his air of romance, were completely out-bidden and overpowered by the memories of the force and weight, the deadly purpose, of Charles Kean's performance, the atmosphere of awe and mystery which had seemed to attend his presence upon the scene. It is to the example of Charles Kean, and not of Fechter, that we owe, as I think, Mr. Irving's revival of the play, with a luxury of decoration and a lavishness of spectacle it has never hitherto enjoyed.

The personation of the twins is taxing, perhaps, rather to the physical than the intellectual resources of the actor, and of course presents no real difficulty to so accomplished an artist as Mr. Irving. Now and then, as I judged, his efforts were marred by a lack of repose and certainty of manner; he was needlessly restless of movement, and varied his tones of voice too frequently. He was very frank and gallant of mien in his Corsican home in the first act, however, if his dress suggested somewhat too much the showy velvet-clad brigand of opera and ballet; very pleasant with the quarrelsome *Colonna* and *Orlando*, and told the story of the apparition admirably. As the love-sick student *Louis* of the second act the actor was unduly sombre and inert, and looked scarcely young enough. This may have been due to the style of dress. Nothing turns upon the date of the story, which, referred to the past, or supposed to set forth recent occurrences, is as true or as untrue either way as anybody could possibly desire. But it has pleased Mr. Irving to reproduce the tight-fitting, high-shouldered, stiff-necked costumes of what may be called the D'Orsay epoch, when there were still dandies extant, and men wore their hair long and the brims of their hats curly; and these fashions undoubtedly now impart a look of age to those adopting them. In the last act Mr. Irving as *Fabien* denounced with effective energy the murderer of *Louis dei Franchi*, and fought the famous duel capitally, receiving excellent support from Mr. Terriss, whose *Château Renaud*, however, was a less weighty and consummate villain than the stage was accustomed to in the days of Mr. Walter Lacy and the late Alfred Wigan. The success of the revival seemed quite beyond question. Mr. Irving was rewarded for his enterprise and exertions

by salvoes of the heartiest applause. Miss Fowler lent grace and intelligence to the small part of *Madame de Lesparre*, and Miss Pauncefort appeared as the mother of the twins. The scenes of the hall of the château, of the interior of the opera, of the *salon* in the house of *M. de Montgiron*, and of the snow-littered glade in the Forest of Fontainebleau, must be counted among the most perfect of stage pictures. Mr. Hamilton Clarke I was glad to find had preserved the well-remembered tremulous tune popularly known as "The Ghost Melody"—re-scoring it, I think—while for the masquerade at the opera-house he has supplied abundantly dance music of most fresh, graceful, and sparkling quality. The surprising brilliance of this scene, with its floods of light and colour, its numberless dancers, its variety of costumes and characters, its real fountains and real flowers and shrubs, its stir, movement, and spirit, mark the advance in stage management and inventiveness since the times of Charles Kean—no mean contriver of spectacle, by the way. There seemed to be armies of Pierrots, Punches, and Débardeurs; but I sought in vain for a Postilion de Lonjumeau, who assuredly would have been present at an opera-ball in 1840. The dancers looked like animated sketches by Gavarni. But one more note. No improvement has been attempted in the matter of the ghost. That apparition is still solid and substantial, rising inch by inch as he moves, or is moved, sideways across the scene—the old, genuine, admired, and thoroughly established ghost of "The Corsican Brothers"—unlike any other ghost ever seen, heard, or dreamt about in this world, or probably elsewhere.

CXXXVI.

"MARY STUART."

[Court Theatre.—October 1880.]

AN English version of Schiller's *Mary Stuart* was produced at Covent Garden Theatre some sixty years ago, and occasionally there have been brief revivals of the

tragedy upon our stage; but it occupies no very secure place in the repertory. Genest, in his *History of the Stage*, referring to the Covent Garden performance, concisely described the play as "very interesting as to its first and part of the fifth act, the second and fourth acts being rather dull, and the third absurd." Genest is to be valued much more for the facts he records than for the opinions he expresses, and it must be remembered that he was a great stickler for historical accuracy. He could not tolerate the notion of *Elizabeth* and *Mary* meeting in Fotheringay Park and there interchanging angry speeches; yet this scene of royal controversy and recrimination, which occurs in the third act of the tragedy, provides it with its most exciting moments, and affords the stage representatives of the rival queens their best opportunities. Otherwise, the intense pathos of the last act notwithstanding, *Mary Stuart* is an undramatic and oppressive work; it is deficient in action, its length is prodigious, and the characters are apt to engage in endless discussions—they are for ever "wanting to argue." The poet's departures from fact are not of much consequence in relation to the theatrical effectiveness of his play. Miscellaneous audiences are not really well versed in history, nor do they resent such tamperings with actuality as tend to the promotion of dramatic interest. So that *Mary* is at last executed, no "compunctious visitings" trouble the average playgoer concerning the supposed love of *Lord Leicester* or of *Sir Edward Mortimer* for the Scottish queen, or as to other equally strange incidents in Schiller's play. A far more serious deficiency is the absence of national character and sentiment. There are scenes and passages in *Mary Stuart* that might have been devised and written by Victor Hugo, they are so thoroughly un-English. In this regard the character of *Elizabeth* is especially untrue, or, as Carlyle has expressed it, "more like one of the French Medici than like our own polite, capricious, coquettish, imperious, yet, on the whole, true-hearted Queen Bess."

No doubt the tragedy, for all its wearisome voluminousness, lives as an acting play, because the character of *Mary* offers many temptations to an actress possessed of certain physical attributes and real tragic power. *Mary* has been

represented in French by Rachel, and in Italian by Ristori; and it may be said at once that Madame Modjeska, for whose sake an English version of the play has been produced, by her portrayal of the character, proves herself well worthy to rank with its most illustrious interpreters. Acting more subtle or refined, more passionate and powerful, than Madame Modjeska presents in the part of *Mary Stuart* can rarely have been seen upon the stage. Of course the lady's strong foreign accent has to be forgiven her; at times this hampers her elocutionary efforts sadly; and in truth, although *Mary* may fairly be accounted an alien princess, speaking English with some restraint, a foreign accent in an English play of tragic complexion is always a misfortune. This allowed for, however, there is nothing but applause to award to Madame Modjeska's performance. The lady is fully endowed with those physical gifts and graces which the part and its traditions demand: she is most picturesque of aspect; she bears herself with a sort of royal elegance; she employs the most sympathetic tones of a singularly musical voice; and by every glance and movement of face, change of attitude or of gesture, she adds new colour and effect to her impersonation, fortifying and perfecting it. She discovers new resources, too, in the wrathful explosion to which she yields herself at the close of the third act, the vituperative storm which for a while fairly demolishes her opponent and drives her from the stage. Yet, in the whirlwind of her passion, there is no forfeiture of womanly grace or declension into extravagance; her vehemence no more becomes rant than passionate music becomes discord. She dresses in admirable taste—not splendidly, for the Queen is deposed and a captive—but with a certain rich and harmonious sobriety, and has the advantage of “looking the character” as probably no other actress now upon the stage could succeed in doing. Her triumph was quite beyond question; she moved the audience, indeed, to very special manifestations of approval.

The play has been newly and skilfully arranged for representation by the Hon. Lewis Wingfield, who might perhaps be encouraged to continue the work of retrenchment and reform; certain of the scenes still move heavily

from the prolixity of the dialogues, and the last act suffers much from undue protraction. The situation is so sad in itself that there is really no need for strong insistence upon its dismal character: in this way *Mary's* elaborate preparations for the scaffold, last dying words, and painful parting from her attendants verge upon the morbid; while the curtain should certainly be allowed to descend the moment the Queen has quitted the stage: one wants nothing more after that. As *Queen Elizabeth* Miss Moodie is certainly spirited, although she may lack power and majesty and personal resemblance to the heroine she represents. In the part of *Leicester* Mr. Clayton does not find very congenial occupation. But Mr. Clayton is always an artist; he never once relaxes his hold of the character he has undertaken, nor misses a chance of impressing it upon the audience; he is always watchful to support and assist the general effect of the representation, and having secured the attention of the spectators, takes care to occupy and retain it by the alertness, intelligence, and energy of his efforts. The other characters are represented creditably enough; at least, the players do not offend if they do not win much distinction. The scenic accessories are in very good taste, while Mr. Beverly's landscape representing Fotheringay Park and Castle is particularly to be commended.

'CXXXVII.

"WILLIAM AND SUSAN."

[St. James's Theatre.—October 1880.]

CERTAIN critics have described Mr. Wills's "William and Susan" as a "rehabilitation" of Douglas Jerrold's "Black-Eyed Susan." Is that sufferer "rehabilitated" who, unnecessarily operated upon, and deprived of his more important limbs and organs, succeeds in escaping from the ruthless hands of his surgeon and dissector and tormentor? Art, it is true, may have supplied the unhappy patient with mechanical in lieu of his natural members, with eyes

of glass and toes of cork ; but, nevertheless, he can hardly be regarded as sound and entire, thoroughly his own man again, "rehabilitated" in the legal sense of the word—reinstated in the rights of which a judicial sentence had dispossessed him. "William and Susan" at the St. James's Theatre is not an old play revived, with certain transpositions and omissions justified and rendered expedient by lapse of time or change of taste. Mr. Wills, while professing to found his drama upon "Black-Eyed Susan," has, in fact, totally sunk and destroyed two out of Douglas Jerrold's three acts. The management pleads that Mr. Blanchard Jerrold, the dramatist's son, has sanctioned Mr. Wills's proceeding. I cannot think that, in the circumstances, Mr. Blanchard Jerrold's sanction of that he was powerless to prevent is of the slightest value. Would Cibber and Tate, and other adapters and mutilators of Shakspeare, have occupied a better position in the judgment of the world had their cobblings and tinkerings received the sanction of the poet's descendants? Yet the critics who censure Cibber applaud Mr. Wills. It may be said that a melodrama by Jerrold is not to be classed with the plays of Shakspeare. Yet the same principle is involved, let the author's name be Shakspeare or Jerrold, or, as Mr. Serjeant Buzfuz would add, "Pickwick or Noakes or Stoakes or Stiles or Brown or Tompson." How, for instance, would Mr. Wills like his "Charles the First" to be revised and retrenched, altered and added to, by Messrs. Meritt and Pettitt, let me say, though I design no offence to those dramatists in, for a moment, availing myself of their names?

After all, Jerrold's "Black-Eyed Susan," if a little old-fashioned, is not such a very obsolete work. It is a picture—somewhat crudely coloured, it may be—of a past epoch ; it is constructed after a straggling fashion, and includes many of those changes of scene—those sudden meetings and partings of "flats"—which modern stage-managers deprecate and eschew. But Jerrold never wrote coarsely or vulgarly : he was essentially an author of refinement ; and there is nothing in any of his plays that need be judged wounding to the susceptibilities even of Miss Podsnap and her class. "Black-Eyed Susan" is not a mere Surrey piece ; it has been represented with success at every London theatre

of pretence—including, of course, Drury Lane, Covent Garden, and the Haymarket. It still keeps possession of the stage. A few weeks since it was prosperously performed for many nights at the Duke's Theatre, with Mr. Rignold as *William*—a very excellent *William*, by the way; and until now Mr. and Mrs. Kendal—Mr. Wills's *William* and *Susan* at the St. James's Theatre—have been content to appear as the *William* and *Susan* of Douglas Jerrold, nor seemed to pine for the transforming, meddling, and idealising influence of Mr. Wills. The sole excuse, therefore, for the existence of "William and Susan" must consist in its superiority to "Black-Eyed Susan." Is, then, Mr. Wills's the better play? I cannot think so. Certainly it troubles the stage-carpenters less; the scenes in Mr. Wills's two acts are confined to pictures of the interior of *William's* cottage and of a Common near Deal; in other respects it seems to me that the advantage lies with Douglas Jerrold. Mr. Wills is not a humorist, and apparently he objects to the humour of others. He has sought to improve the play by purging it of almost its every joke, its every sparkle of wit, as a man might hope to lighten a ship by plucking and flinging away the feathers of all the fowls on board. "William and Susan" is a doleful and depressing work. The heroine is throughout "like Niobe, all tears;" while *William*, deprived of his jests, his yarns, his nautical metaphors, his hornpipe, and the sea-breezy flavour that was wont to attend him, becomes a very dull and commonplace person; sentence of death seems to hang over him from the first. Jerrold's play succeeded because of its pleasantness, not less than because of its pathos. Mr. Wills has struck out all the pleasantness—the characters are not allowed even a smile upon any pretence—and has over-accentuated the pathos, dwelling upon it and augmenting it in every possible way. The result is exceeding dismalness. Nor can it be said that the play has gained one jot in probability or in resemblance to nature by Mr. Wills's efforts to improve and exalt it. Mr. Wills often writes admirably, but he has never shown himself expert as a playwright, and he is here seen at his clumsiest. Burlesque is approached when *Captain Crossree* calls at *Susan's* cottage to ask her to dance with him, and when the *Admiral*, in full dress,

with a staff of officers in attendance, promenades Deal Common to present a copper token to a seaman before the mast; while the conversion of *Captain Crosstree* into a deliberate villain, cherishing during many years a design to effect the betrayal of *Susan*, and subjecting her virtue to violent assault, while she is still weeping the departure of her husband, is not merely maladroit, but is in the very worst taste. The rough expedient of the older play—the accidental tipsy rudeness of the *Captain*, suddenly perceived and resented by *William*—was really far more artistic. Do we live in such squeamish times that intoxication may not be exhibited upon the boards of the St. James's Theatre? Must the *Cassios* of the future get, not drunk, but merely exhilarated by an overdose of zoedone or ginger-beer, or some other harmless non-alcoholic mixture? According to the ruling of "*William and Susan*," it is lawful in stage-plays for a man to conduct himself outrageously to a woman, provided always that he is perfectly sober the while.

Mr. and Mrs. Kendal appear to find pleasure in personating *William* and *Susan*; but I do not think the parts particularly suited to their histrionic method. Their best successes have been obtained in comedies of a drawing-room order; they seem deficient in simplicity and sincerity in these characters derived from humble life; their airs of homely earnestness and excitement are too manifestly artificial. They play cleverly, of course; they always play cleverly—they would play *Macbeth* and *Lady Macbeth* cleverly; but their efforts are not, I think, wholly convincing or satisfying. Mr. Kendal, if he does not look very sailor-like, and his voice, from its peculiar quality, is with difficulty attuned to pathos, is very manly and energetic, winning his chief applause in the third act, which Mr. Wills has left unadulterated. Mrs. Kendal unwisely cumbers herself with a quasi-Yorkshire dialect; and in her desire to be lowly occasionally becomes *Audrey*-like; but she plays with unflagging spirit, and distributes many happy touches over her performance. In the last act she yields to the temptation to exaggerate the distresses of the situation—which is trying enough in all conscience—and her final prayer, pointedly addressed to the gallery, should surely be excised. Mr. Hare furnishes a highly finished

cabinet portrait of the *Admiral*; and Mr. Wenman is most effective as *Truck*, the second villain of the story, counting as the first *Captain Crosstree*, played with sound force and discretion by Mr. Barnes. All the scenic accessories are complete and accurate, "even to the gaiter buttons," as Marshal Lebœuf said on a memorable occasion. The play was received with loud applause and copious tears; the audience seemed thoroughly to enjoy the miseries the management had provided.

CXXXVIII.

"ANNE-MIE."

[Prince of Wales's Theatre.—November 1880.]

THE melodrama of "Anne-Mie," presented in London by the Dutch company last season, has been skilfully adapted to the English stage. No doubt the work has its weakness: the story is scarcely substantial enough to bear the author's diffuse method of narrating it; the superabundant supply of what is called "local colour" sometimes threatens to obscure the design altogether; and certain of the characters seem indistinctly conceived or inconsistently developed. There is exaggeration about the frenzied remorse of the old man *Dirksen*, who has undergone three years' imprisonment for the almost justifiable offence of stabbing, not slaying, the seducer of his daughter; and it is hard to account for the occasional lapses into sentimentalism of *Jan Schuif*, nicknamed "the Fiend," and regarded generally as an irredeemable wretch, a villain of the deepest dye. "Anne-Mie" interests, however, if in no very powerful degree; it may be safely said indeed that the drama will prove satisfactory to those playgoers who are tolerably supplied with patience. The dialogue would certainly be improved by condensation, and I think the performance would gain considerably in effect if sundry of the subordinate characters were reduced to a still more subordinate condition. One change made by the adapter strikes me as a mistake. He

has converted the betrayer of poor *Anne-Mie* into an Englishman, and this introduction of a foreign element is rather disturbing to the general harmony of the subject. When all is so thoroughly and laboriously Dutch, the figure of the Englishman in his tweed suit is as a blot upon the picture. There is also this objection: the marriage of the Englishman with *Anne-Mie* would not, according to English law, really legitimate her child *Lise*, born out of wedlock. The dramatist lays so much stress upon the legitimacy of *Lise*—her union with her lover, *Koenraad Deel*, depending upon the removal of all suspicion touching her birth and status—it is unfortunate that she should only be legitimated at last in a partial or one-sided way. However, could it have been shown that *Lise* was really the lawful child of *Herbert Russell*, the civil engineer, the drama would have suffered some loss of national character; *Lise* would then become an English subject.

Great pains have been taken with the accessories of the play, and altogether more perfect stage-pictures of Dutch life and character can hardly have been seen. The national costumes have been carefully copied, and the scene-painters have provided admirable views of *Anne-Mie's* home, *Kwak's* inn, and the village of Heer-Arendskerke. Miss Geneviève Ward's performance of *Anne-Mie* is much to be commended for its strict fidelity to nature, its quiet force, its exceeding tenderness, its artistic completeness. Of course the actress is seen to more advantage in the later portions of the drama, when *Anne-Mie* appears as the mother of *Lise*, than in the first act, devoted to the youthful life of the heroine, before *Dirksen* has learnt of his daughter's fall from virtue and drawn his knife upon her betrayer. The actress, gifted with a voice of most melodious quality, has acquired special elocutionary skill; her speeches, delivered without effort, never fail in significance and impressiveness. Those more vehement displays of emotion which, on previous occasions, Miss Ward has shown that she has absolutely at command, are not necessary to the personation of the simple, self-repressed, and sorrowing burgher-woman, *Anne-Mie*. It would be difficult, however, to surpass the pathetic power of her scenes of devoted affection, contrition, and confession with her child. Here it should be

said, useful support is given to the drama by Miss C. Grahame's careful performance of *Lise*. Mr. Forbes Robertson is gallant and pleasant as the lover, *Koenraad*; the unsatisfactory Englishman, the violent *Dirksen*, and the wicked *Jan Schuif* finding tolerable interpretation at the hands of Messrs. Bruce, Fernandez, and Flockton; while Mrs. Leigh Murray provides an animated sketch of the brisk and energetic village hostess *Neeltje Kwak*.

CXXXIX.

"HAMLET."

[Princess's Theatre.—November 1880.]

THE old Princess's Theatre—it was not so very old: hardly forty years—has given place to a new building, very commodious as to its arrangements, with spacious halls, saloons, and corridors, a raised roof, a widened stage, and profuse decorations, rather overpowering in the fresh brilliance of their painting, carving, and gilding. Time, no doubt, will sober this garishness of aspect, and even tone down the too bright crimson of the satin draperies, which now shed rather heated reflections upon the auditory. The tiers of boxes protrude curiously, approaching the stage something after the fashion adopted in the vanished Théâtre Historique, built by Alexandre Dumas; and, generally, it may be said that the comfort of the public has been greatly considered. Good views of the stage seem obtainable from all parts of the house, and incongruous complaints that the spectators cannot see are not likely any longer to be audible.

The new theatre opened with a performance of "Hamlet," introducing the American tragedian, Mr. Edwin Booth, who may be accounted new to our playgoers of to-day, albeit he fulfilled an engagement some years since at the Haymarket Theatre, when, for various reasons, his exertions obtained for him but a moderate measure of success. Mr. Booth is now a mature actor, too mature, perhaps, to appear advantageously as "young *Hamlet*;" for though

veteran, and even patriarchal, *Hamlets* have been applauded upon our stage, the players in such case have usually grown grey, as it were, in the service of the public, and their age has been forgiven them because their more youthful years have been prized and famous. Born and trained in America, the son of the English actor Junius Brutus Booth—the copyist, so the critics wrote: the rival, and even the superior, so his admirers maintained, of Edmund Kean—Mr. Edwin Booth is clearly an actor of the Kean school. He is low of stature, compact of figure; he moves easily and gracefully, if he moves too often—sometimes with a harlequin's suddenness; he is very mannered; but he is thoroughly skilled in all the business of the scene. He is dark-complexioned, wearing something of an Italian look, and saturnine of expression; he urges to grimace his adroit play of face—knits and unknits, lowers and lifts, his brows—rolls this way and that his eyeballs unceasingly, and even distressingly; he permits himself an excess of gesture; his “manual eloquence,” as it has been called, is certainly redundant; his hands wave or smooth, scoop or saw, the air, or are shaken aloft in an alarmed or deprecatory manner, with a frequency that is wearying and irritating. His voice, showing some signs of wear and tear, is yet admirably resonant and of good compass; he speaks like a trained elocutionist, distinctly and incisively, although prone here and there to a certain drawling emphasis, and now and then, as when he observed to *Ophelia* that a great man's memory might “outlive his life *haff a yeer*,” betraying an American method of utterance and pronunciation. His histrionic style is remarkable for its energy and alertness, its neatness and nimbleness; he is always intelligent, ingenious, busy, intent upon the full exhibition of the character he personates, of giving all possible point and effect to the speeches he delivers. Some new readings he affects: he prefers, for instance, the “ennobled queen” of the first folio to “mobled queen,” the more accepted reading; and he departs from the old stage traditions in assuming occasionally a familiar manner in passages that have often been pompously declaimed, the while he sits, lounges, or reclines, with an air the elder players would have judged to be too unheroic, if not absolutely indecorous. He is not princely; his live-

liness comes too near to flippancy; and his conduct during the play-scene seemed deficient in earnestness, as though the *Kings* enforced betrayal of his guilt had really something comical about it. He has no special command of pathetic expression; his great scene with *Ophelia* was more forcible than tender, and suffered also from the old-fashioned habits of constant action, of tossing up the arms and striding to and fro, which, I believe, Edmund Kean first imported into the representation of "Hamlet." As it appeared to me, Mr. Booth's chief success was won in the first act, when his voice was at its freshest and firmest—its strength waned and its tones flattened, unfortunately, as the play proceeded—when his manner was as yet new to the audience, and before his defects as an actor had become too manifest. His first soliloquy was also his best; he seemed afterwards to repeat his efforts with weakened resources, as though, bent upon making at once a decided impression, he had exerted himself too prodigally at the outset of the performance. His scenes with *Rosencrantz* and *Guildestern*—and especially his interview with them after the play of "The Mousetrap"—were, I thought, contrived with much address. He was bitterly yet quietly scornful, and refrained from that splenetic explosiveness to which certain *Hamlets* have descended, even to snapping in twain the innocent "recorder" produced by the *Players*. Altogether, so far as a first judgment after one hearing can be trusted, Mr. Booth's *Hamlet* is a spirited, elaborate, painstaking, and expert but conventional performance. He presents essentially the *Hamlet* of the stage, with variations and embroideries of immaterial quality, and not the *Hamlet* of the student of Shakspeare. His chief aim is theatrical effectiveness of the old-established sort. His *Hamlet*, in truth, may be said to be the *Hamlet* of the past. Often I found myself reminded of the *Hamlet* of Mr. Charles Kean: if I missed his physical demerits, I missed also his intensity, his special power of startling and kindling his audience. It may be that what is chiefly lacking to Mr. Booth's labours is a leaven of genius. This the actor possibly possesses; his friends and fellow-countrymen assert as much very positively. But, as I judge, this valuable element does not manifest itself in his performance of *Hamlet*.

Comparisons are reprehended, but in regard to them there exist no total abstainers. Witnessing Mr. Booth's assumption of *Hamlet*, it was impossible to dismiss from the mind all thought of Mr. Irving's well-known and admired personation of the character. I will not pretend to determine in a line or two the advantages enjoyed by one performer over the other. But a few words upon the subject I may venture to write. Something the Englishman might gain if he could emulate the American's promptness, vigilance, decisiveness of manner, ease of action, and freedom of limb. But, as I think, the *Hamlet* of Mr. Irving is to be preferred in that it is more picturesque, more poetic, more intellectually interesting, and altogether more genuinely Shakspearian.

CXL

"RICHELIEU."

[Princess's Theatre.—November 1880.]

THE late Lord Lytton's "*Richelieu*," first presented in the year 1839, is a poor play enough, viewed as a work of art; but the part of *Richelieu* continues to be dear to the players; it assures them of so much applause; it provides so many opportunities for histrionic flourish and parade. The author wrote almost at the dictation of Macready—then the manager of Covent Garden Theatre—who for some time entertained grave doubts touching the prospects of "*Richelieu*." "I fear it will not do, cannot be made effective," he recorded in his journal. Various changes were introduced at his suggestion, the dramatist now resisting and now yielding to the proposals of the actor. "But when," writes Macready, "I developed the object of the whole plan of alterations, he was in ecstasies. I never saw him so excited, several times exclaiming he was 'enchanted,' and observing, in high spirits, 'What a fellow you are!'" It may be conjectured that Macready's suggestions tended to the aggrandisement of the leading

part, if not to the dwarfing of the other characters. As *Richelieu* Macready obtained signal success; and when the time came for his abandonment of the Cardinal's robes, they were assumed by his legitimate successor, Mr. Phelps, and by other tragedians wont to sustain what is called "leading business," "*Richelieu*" taking rank as a "stock piece." It was in 1873 that Mr. Irving first essayed the character.

The stage *Richelieu* is a curious compound of exalted patriotism and grovelling cunning: he is now a grim jester and now a fervid patriot; he deals both in lively banter and lofty rhetoric; he is now sarcastic as *Iago*, and anon passionate as *Lear*; he is the vital principle of the play, however, which becomes inert and lifeless enough when he is absent from the scene. To the loves of *Adrien de Mauprat* and *Julie de Mortemar* little interest attaches; while the proceedings of the conspirators, constrained by the dramatist to play the geese to *Richelieu's* fox, are scarcely at any time intelligible, or seem always woefully deficient in common sense. Their simplicity in believing their foe to have really expired when he has but simulated death is certainly surprising; they have gathered about his couch, he lies stretched out before them, yet, for fear of disturbing the plans of the author, no one is courageous or curious enough to put forth a hand, and make sure of the facts of the case. The play lacks a substantial story and continuity of interest. Thackeray, reviewing "*Richelieu*" in *Fraser's Magazine*, which had many readers forty years ago, complained of the play's "disagreeable bustle and petty complication of intrigue." He continued: "It always seemed to me as if one heard doors perpetually clapping and banging; one was puzzled to follow the train of conversation in the midst of the perpetual small noises that distracted one right and left." The audience are kept on the alert, however, by the persistent effort made to substitute abundance of incident for strength of plot; while of pungent dialogue, smart sayings, and pompous blank verse, the husks of poetic thought, if not quite the thought itself, there is a very plentiful supply.

Mr. Edwin Booth, although in some measure he is to be considered as an old-fashioned actor, treats *Richelieu* after

a new and original manner. Special stress is laid upon *Richelieu's* airs of gallantry and vanity; his age and infirmities are exhibited in a more comical light than has hitherto been permitted to shine upon them. There is something that reminds one of Mr. Phelps's strongly-limned rendering of *Lord Ogleby*—a performance Mr. Booth can scarcely have witnessed—in this new impersonation of *Richelieu* by the American actor. The physical attributes and failings of the Cardinal are much insisted on. His weakness of health is shown by the slowness and tremulousness of his movements, by the quavering of certain of his tones, by his "hacking" cough which ensues upon the slightest exertion, and constantly drives him to his lozenge or comfit box. The representation is remarkable both for its elaboration and its force. The portraits of *Richelieu* have been closely followed; the actor's face has been "made up" with peculiar art; he has been choice as to his costumes, and altogether has secured great picturesqueness of aspect. A tendency to excessive play of face and gesticulation seems habitual to him; he delights in strong and sudden effects; and sometimes, it must be said, his zeal and his energy urge him too near the confines of extravagance. A trained elocutionist, and gifted with a voice of rare power and compass, he is always audible; his sagacity as an actor enabling him to give keen point and singular significance to his speeches, if he now and then inclines to over-emphasis, or to that staccato system of delivery—detaching syllables and even dislocating words for the sake of exceeding distinctness—which was so much affected by players of the last generation. In the earlier passages of the play Mr. Booth wins applause by his adroitness and ingenuity as an actor of defined and almost humorous character, and his power to personate; in the later scenes he demonstrates his fine command of tragic vehemence and passion. *Richelieu's* great speeches denouncing *Barradas* and invoking the powers of the Church in aid of the persecuted *Julie* are delivered with extraordinary vigour and virulence, the oratorical frenzy of the actor's manner exercising an electrical effect upon the audience, greatly exciting them, and urging them to most enthusiastic applause. The success of Mr. Booth as

Richelieu was indeed very complete. His performance proved him to be an artist of real distinction. That as an actor he adheres strenuously to the traditions and artifices of the theatre must be accepted as one of the conditions attendant upon his performance; he is "stagy" certainly, but then "*Richelieu*" is a particularly "stagy" play. Indeed, it may be said generally of Lord Lytton's dramatic compositions that they seem to be expressly devised to inculcate and stimulate "staginess." In any case, Mr. Booth as *Richelieu* is not more "stagy" than have been his predecessors in the part. That the American tragedian has very completely gratified the patrons of the Princess's Theatre cannot be questioned.

CXLI.

"ADRIENNE LECOUVREUR."

[Court Theatre.—December 1880.]

ADRIENNE LECOUVREUR was Rachel's first prose part, her first step out of the classical repertory. MM. Scribe and Legouvé had expressly contrived the drama for her, taking care to provide her with sufficient opportunities for display; but she was hardly to be enticed: she was so devoted to the old poets that she could show little consideration to the new playwrights. For six months they were left uncertain as to whether she would or would not appear as their heroine. It then seemed to them that they had better offer the character to Mdle. Rose Chéri. Forthwith Rachel made up her mind: "*Adrienne Lecouvreur*" was read anew at the Théâtre Français, and represented upon its stage for the first time on the 14th April 1849. Rachel's success was very great. "*Adrienne Lecouvreur*" was repeated again and again; wherever the actress journeyed—and she journeyed far—she took the play with her. It was as *Adrienne Lecouvreur* she was last seen upon the stage, the feeble shadow of her former self, and very faint and weary, coughing incessantly, a poor death-stricken woman;

this was at Charleston on the 17th December 1856. Of the many works devised for her—and the dramatists of France laboured to find becoming occupation for her genius—"Adrienne Lecouvreur" only has retained its place in the theatre. It was translated into Italian for Madame Ristori; it was adapted to the English stage by Mr. Oxenford as "The Reigning Favourite," the heroine being personated now by Mrs. Sterling, and now by Miss Sedgwick. Of late Mdle. Sarah Bernhardt has taken possession of the part. And now what is understood to be an American version of the play has been presented at the Court Theatre for the sake of Madame Modjeska, whose *Adrienne* has for some years past been held in the States to be one of the most perfect performances of the admired Polish actress.

From an English point of view "Adrienne Lecouvreur" is not a particularly interesting or attractive drama; and presented in five acts, as it is presented at the Court Theatre, it is often very tedious. It would have been better, I think, if the management had revived Mr. Oxenford's adaptation, which is, of course, very well written, is in three acts only, represses sundry of the minor incidents, and dispenses with much superfluous dialogue. The translation at the Court is poorly executed, with curious alternations of high-flown and vulgar diction; the characters say "thanks" to each other with quite a modern air, and the *Prince de Bouillon* talks of "kicking up a row." The long exposition of the manners and customs of the Théâtre Français greatly encumbers the play, and leaves the audience in a very apathetic state. English equivalents are not to be found for La Fontaine's fable and the tirade from *Phèdre*, with which the *Adriennes* of the French stage have been wont to charm and to excite their auditors. Many of the grand points and effects of the original thus fail to impress in a London theatre. It is of less moment that the morality of the play is open to reproach; the dramatists had to deal with a profligate period, and they have been at pains to idealise their heroine, and to exhibit her in as engaging a light as possible. Even the tragedy of her death has been given a poetical complexion that is not strictly its due, if it be authentic that *Adrienne* was

not poisoned by malice, but died because of the accidental administration of an over-dose of ipecacuanha. Her stage career began in 1717 and ended in 1730. She was much loved, or she had many lovers: the actor Legrand, Voltaire, Lord Peterborough, and Marshal Saxe, "sans compter," as a biographer puts it, "celui-ci qui fut père de sa première fille, sans parler de celui-là qui fut père de la seconde, car si on cherchait bien, on trouverait, à ce qu'il paraît, beaucoup de descendants de l'illustre comédienne." In converting the actress into the heroine of a modern drama, the authors have certainly exhibited much ingenuity. No doubt they have strained probability somewhat, as when they require the spectators to believe that the *Princesse de Bouillon* would appoint a meeting with her lover, the *Comte de Saxe*, in the *petite maison* presented by her husband to his mistress, *Mademoiselle Duclos*, the *Prince* retaining possession of a key which admits him to the scene of the assignation at any moment. But then the interview in the dark which follows between the *Princesse* and *Adrienne*, rivals in love, neither being able to recognise or identify the other, is highly dramatic. And in the whole range of the drama there are few more moving or distressing scenes than that of the death of *Adrienne*, by means of the poisoned bouquet, in the last act.

Madame Modjeska's success as *Adrienne* is most unequivocal. Her performance is artistic and refined, ingenious, forcible, elaborate, and, in the final situation, most affecting. I know of no actress who has been able so completely and curiously to combine intensity of dramatic expression with exceeding naturalness of manner. Of course, for stage purposes, her portrayal of nature is idealised and sublimated, her picturesqueness is arrived at by a consummate exercise of art; but she fairly succeeds in compelling her public to forget that she is acting, and to accept as genuine her simulations of emotion, excitement, and suffering. I have seen more pathetic players and more passionate; I have seen none more consistent and sustained in the representation of character, more varied in the graces and arts which invest stage portraiture with completeness. To special charms of aspect, presence, and manner, she adds admirable taste in dress; her costumes as *Adrienne*

are exquisite in their arrangements of line, lustre, and colour. The audience were stirred by her performance to great manifestations of enthusiasm; she was called for and recalled, applauded to the echo, complimented with innumerable bouquets. Her triumph, I may note, is the more remarkable in that it is achieved in spite of very serious obstacles. She appears in an infirmly translated French play, which in its subject and treatment stands much removed from English sympathies, which scarcely addresses itself to English comprehension; and it is hard—I find it very hard—to forgive the lady not merely her foreign accent and pronunciation, but her habit of slurring her speeches, and rendering them indistinct if not inaudible, by reason of her excessive rapidity of utterance. It must be understood, indeed, that Madame Modjeska's efforts have to be accepted with these conditions and drawbacks, or denied altogether. At present it seems that the public has no difficulty about the saving clauses and provisions which accompany the lady's representations.

Madame Modjeska is but poorly supported at the Court Theatre. English actors are seldom seen to such disadvantage as when they attempt to picture French life and manners of the last century. Miss Amy Roselle is ineffective as the *Princesse de Bouillon*, and Mr. Forbes Robertson as the *Comte de Saxe* does not impress. Skill to represent the grand airs and manners of the days of wig and sword and hair-powder seems lost to our stage. Mr. Beveridge's *Prince de Bouillon* lacks distinction, and Mr. Lin Rayne's *Abbé* is not to be tolerated upon any terms. Mr. Anson fails to understand the character of *Michonnet*, the *régisseur* of the Théâtre Français; this, Regnier's original character, was sustained upon the English stage in 1849 by "old Farren."

CXLII.

"THE FOOL'S REVENGE."

[Princess's Theatre.—January 1881.]

MR. TOM TAYLOR'S "The Fool's Revenge," first produced at Sadler's Wells in 1859, is a timid adaptation of "Le Roi s'Amuse." The English playwright proved himself ingenious in avoiding certain of the more dreadful incidents of the original, and in substituting for these several effective scenes of his own invention; moreover, he converted M. Hugo's rhymed Alexandrines into blank verse of respectable quality. Indeed, he was so painstaking about his task, that, having an adapter's views as to the constitution of originality, Mr. Taylor was convinced at last that he had produced an original work. Yet if deduction be made from "The Fool's Revenge" of all that belongs to "Le Roi s'Amuse," the residuum will not be found to be of particular value. Mr. Taylor preserved the life and honour of the heroine, provided her with a faithful lover, and, introducing a jealous Duchess and a poisoned cup, made away with the Italian Duke, who, in the English play, as in the opera of Verdi, fills the place assigned by the French dramatist to Francis I. Thus "The Fool's Revenge" terminates with stricter regard for the conventions of poetical justice than M. Hugo cared to be hampered with. It is curious, indeed, how widely the adapter departed from the ground-plan of the original, while retaining so much of the superstructure. "Le sujet véritable du drama," explains M. Hugo, "c'est la malédiction de Monsieur de Saint-Vallier." This *malédiction* Mr. Taylor suppressed. *Bertuccio*, the English representative of *Triboulet*, who bears the name of *Rigoletto* on the operatic stage, is robbed of his daughter, and suffers terribly on her account; but there has been no foreshadowing of his doom in the story of *Saint-Vallier* and his child. The deformed jester does not mock the bereaved nobleman, to provoke his curse and to undergo presently a like fate. "La malédiction du père de

Diane s'accomplit sur le père de Blanche." Mr. Taylor deemed it more important to save the daughter of *Bertuccio*.

But if a weaker and more commonplace work than "*Le Roi s'Amuse*," nevertheless "*The Fool's Revenge*" has its powerful moments, its exciting situations. The adaptation was contrived, if I remember rightly, for Robson, an actor of peculiar genius, who does not seem to be very freshly remembered nowadays; but for some reason the first *Bertuccio* was Mr. Phelps, who obtained great and merited applause by the vigour and intensity of his performance of the character. It always seemed to me, however, that, in his earlier scenes, Mr. Phelps's jester was more vindictive and venomous of manner than was quite consistent with probability, or than the text demanded; for a court-fool, however disposed to malignancy of humour, must now and then have assumed an air of good-nature even if he had it not. Mr. Phelps's buffoon was apt to be too persistently scorpion-like—a combination of *Apemantus* and *Thersites* in his acrid churlishness and scurrility. In the later portions of the drama, as the declared father of *Fiordelisa*, the actor was tender and pathetic, and displayed great passion in the crowning scenes, when the failure of *Bertuccio's* plot becomes clear to him, and its terrible recoil excites him to frenzy and desperation. I do not know that the part has been essayed by any other English actor. In America "*The Fool's Revenge*" has enjoyed great favour, I understand, because of Mr. Booth's performance of *Bertuccio*; and it is, of course, for the sake of Mr. Booth that the play has now been revived at the Princess's Theatre. Altogether, it may safely be judged that Mr. Booth's efforts in "*The Fool's Revenge*" will enhance his reputation in this country, if doubt may arise as to whether the character of *Bertuccio* is quite worthy of the genuine art, the exceeding labour and painstaking the actor expends upon it. For *Bertuccio* is a creature of melodrama, albeit he speaks blank verse; he is truer to stage effect than to nature. And the character, as I think, is more taxing than remunerative to its representative, who is called upon for incessant exertion, for continuous strain upon his histrionic resources, for violent contrasts of light and shade; to be

one thing to his stage companions and another to the audience; to be at once odious and respectable; to seem to revel in the degradation of his position while claiming sympathy for the purity and exaltation of his sentiments. Mr. Booth certainly accomplishes all this, and succeeds in exciting his audience in an uncommon degree. He is able to enwrap himself, as it were, in the character of *Bertuccio*, to the complete concealment of his own identity. He lays stress upon the jester's uncomeliness of aspect, his misshapen limbs and distorted movements; and he is skilled in the gestures, the attitudes and gyrations—what may be called the stage business—of buffoonery. In his motley suit, with his jester's bells jingling about him, he sinks curled up at the feet of his interlocutors, crouches as in dread of their buffets, dances quaintly around them, or stands stork-like on one leg, while significantly wielding his bauble as a weapon, now of offence now of defence. His every utterance gains point and accent from the appropriate glance and action accompanying it, his ever-varying expression, his restlessness of movement; while his noble voice and his fine elocutionary system prove of signal advantage in the more declamatory scenes, as, for instance, in the narrative of *Bertuccio's* early life and suffering, or in his speech of rapt exultation, when his triumph seems at hand, the consummation of his revenge imminent. At the climax of the story the actor is fairly entitled to a certain liberty and violence of manner, bordering upon the extravagant; for moderation needs must be dispensed with when the fury of despair has to be depicted. No doubt Mr. Booth's passion departs from heroic bounds, descends to a familiar level, is grotesque and almost comic in certain of its manifestations, its colloquiality of tone, its homeliness of pose and gesture; yet I think the actor's desire to be real and true did not transgress artistic limits, and assuredly the effect of his performance upon his auditors was very great indeed. His agonising cries of despair rang through the house, and awoke extraordinary excitement. Mr. Booth's success, indeed, was most complete, if the play itself seemed to satisfy less than it did twenty years ago. The actor obtains better support in this than in the other plays produced on his account.

The *Duchess* of Mrs. Vezin, the *Duke* of Mr. Redmund, the *Fiordelisa* of Miss Gerard, and the *Serafino* of Mr. Cartwright are all creditable performances.

CXLIII.

"THE CUP."

[Lyceum Theatre.—January 1881.]

CONSIDERED as the offspring of a famous poet, "The Cup" is but of dwarfish and puny proportions: it must be quite the smallest tragedy in the language. Mr. Irving has supplied the work with the richest of stage decorations, but he has been unable to dissemble or cloak its inherent poverty. The setting is magnificent; the gem is minute, and not of the purest lustre. The Lyceum audience, it is true, welcomed the production of "The Cup" with a fervid display of enthusiasm; but beneath all the foam and surge of the complimentary and conventional rapture there rolled, as it seemed to me, a deep sea of disappointment. "The Cup," viewed apart from the scenic trappings and accessories with which the lavish manager has adorned it, the play, as distinguished from the spectacle, proved to be bald, crude, uninteresting, and ineffective: a poetic sketch, a dramatic anecdote or study indiscreetly brought upon the stage, while, in truth, as little suited for theatrical performance as one of the so-called Sacred Dramas of Mrs. Hannah More, let us say, or one of the Imaginary Conversations of Walter Savage Landor. Plutarch's story of Camma, the Galatian widow, who married a second husband only to poison him, in revenge for his murder of her first spouse, had been already arranged for the stage by French, German, and Italian dramatists. Madame Ristori was wont to obtain great applause by her personation of *Camma*, but not in London, I think; for our Licensers of five-and-twenty years ago would probably have interdicted the play. However, concerning these matters we are not so tightly laced as we used to be: our morality, nowadays, is not worn as a strait-waistcoat, but, "like a lady's loose cloak, hangs about us,"

easily put off and on; and Mr. Tennyson can have experienced no difficulty with the Examiner of Plays touching the production of "The Cup." To the earlier tragedies dealing with the subject Mr. Tennyson has probably not referred, otherwise "The Cup" might have manifested more expertness of workmanship. For, as he has demonstrated upon former occasions, the Laureate is not skilled as a playwright; he has no real knowledge of the theatre, small sympathy with its exigencies. A play to him is little more than a collection of choice speeches: the meeting and the parting of various personages charged with the interchange of poetic sentiments exquisitely expressed. With some few lay figures in the background, there are but three characters in "The Cup"—*Camma*, the heroine; *Sinnatus*, her first, and *Synorix*, her second husband. *Sinnatus* is slain at the close of the first act: not wilfully murdered, for he is stabbed in a sudden encounter with *Synorix*, whose own life was imperilled; the offended husband, brandishing a sword, was rushing upon him; forthwith *Synorix* plies the dagger chance has placed in his hand. An adroit dramatist, without being specially observant of classical prescriptions, would probably have packed into one scene the events contained in the first act of "The Cup." Mr. Tennyson, for the unfolding of this portion of his plot, requires the display, first of a landscape with distant view of the city of Galatia; next of the interior of the house of *Sinnatus*; and then of the landscape again, seen under the influence of early morning. Be it said that Mr. Telbin is thus enabled to display his art to perfection: a more admirable stage picture than his view of Galatia has never been exhibited. And here I may note occurs the superfluous incident of *Sinnatus's* noisy hunting-party, and the introduction of "real dogs" upon the stage. The second act, occupied with the death by poison both of *Camma* and *Synorix*, would be bare enough but for the efforts of the scene-painter, Mr. Hawes Craven,—whose interior of the Temple of Artemis is marvellously contrived,—and the groupings and processions, the burning of incense, the mysterious rites, the flickering of altar-fires and lamps, and the strewing of bridal flowers, arranged by the stage-manager, to say nothing of the musical accompaniments, the marches and hymns to

Artemis, composed by Mr. Hamilton Clarke; the catastrophe, the quaffing of the poisoned cup, and the deaths of the drinkers, being, so far as the poet is concerned, but unimpressively conducted.

The story is no doubt of a painful, and even rather revolting character; and the dramatist who would found upon it an appeal to sympathy has a task of uncommon difficulty before him. *Camma* should win esteem by her devotion to *Sinnatus*; yet *Sinnatus* is shown to be a poor sort of creature, obtuse, absorbed by the pleasures of the chase, disposed, it might even be, to hold his wife "something better than his dog, a little dearer than his horse." *Synorix*, the villain of the story, is really its most interesting personage. He is at least consistent and intelligible; he has one object in view, and he pursues it to the death. His passion for *Camma*, his resolve to possess her, claims respect because of its force and absoluteness. He is a traitor to Galatia, no doubt; he is unscrupulous and libertine; but he is true to himself; he risks all for his love, and he almost triumphs; he falls at last unfairly, a victim to his faith in the woman he has made his wife and his queen. The poet has limned *Camma* far less firmly and distinctly; she is ascribed in the first instance no special attributes of grandeur, no great intellectual power, no supremacy of will, no strong political opinions, save that she is permitted a patriotic speech upon the question whether Galatia should rather fight or yield to Rome; she is the young, beautiful, sentimental, and rather doting wife of a weak and dull husband. The spectator is not—perhaps could not be—prepared for her change to the furious woman of the last scene, the savage Pagan priestess, intent upon a diabolical scheme of vengeance, eager to murder both *Synorix* and herself. Indeed, her plan has not even this limit; crime comes so easy to her, that she tenders her cup of poisoned wine to an inoffensive bystander *Antonius*, a Roman general, who certainly has done her no personal injury. Happily, the general is a water-drinker; he puts from him the cup, and the murderess is so far discomfited. She calmly proceeds to poison her bridegroom, and watches him exultingly as he drains the fatal chalice. Is it surprising that modern spectators find it difficult to consider her conduct with much lenience?

"The Cup" is written, if not in the Laureate's happiest manner, yet with much of his wonted delicacy of fancy and elegance of diction. There are several fine declamatory passages, and here and there occur descriptions and images of singular beauty. It must be said, however, that Mr. Tennyson's Muse is apt to employ ambiguous phrases, to resort to refinements—I shrink from saying affectations—of expression, which render her utterances oftentimes perplexing to the general ear. Fine thoughts appeared to be now and then too superfinely presented, too much involved in dainty subtleties of idiom, for immediate comprehension by average intelligences. It seems to me, in fact, that Mr. Tennyson's verses should at all times rather be read than listened to; and read, of course, with abundant opportunity for lingering over and recurrence. Possibly the poet is too literate and fastidious for the theatre. If his theme had been more happily chosen, had possessed more of human interest, and appealed more directly to general sympathies, if his characters had shown a closer correspondence with nature, these defects might not have been so evident. But "The Cup" seemed sadly lacking in the frank, robust, clear speech of the elder dramatists. The players were in this respect never cordially and thoroughly *en rapport* with their audience, albeit, as I have said, the external compliments attendant upon first representations plentifully graced the occasion. As I judge, the tragedy failed to impress.

The representation left something to be desired. Mr. Terriss is able to accomplish little with the character of *Sinnatus*; but the materials are slight, the poet having assigned *Sinnatus* but a limited measure of significance and dignity, while his career in the play is brought to a close suddenly and prematurely. Moreover, the actor is required to wear a costume so quaint of colour and device as to suggest connection with fairy extravaganza. As *Synorix* Mr. Irving, making needless parade, perhaps, of the villany of the character, and cumbered somewhat by the sustained efforts of declamation required of him, presents a most picturesque figure, and plays with excellent art, his death scene being especially well conceived and executed. Upon Miss Ellen Terry devolves the severest of duties. As the

Camma of the first act she is delightfully tender and sympathetic, dainty and spiritual; she wears her fluent classic draperies with exquisite address; her attitudes and movements are instinct with poetic and artistic grace. As the widowed *Camma*, frenzied, a Pythoness, vindictive, malignant, the actress is less successful; her powers are plainly overtaxed; her fitness for the character becomes questionable; she is deficient in physical force; she has not at command the necessary vehemence and abandonment. Her *Camma* breathing vengeance and dealing out death in the Temple of Artemis does not awe or greatly excite. There is genuine pathos, however, in her cries to *Sinnatus* as she expires, hoping to join him in the Blessed Isles—the “ever-shining shores beneath an ever-rising sun.”

CXLIV.

THE MONEY-SPINNER.

[St. James's Theatre.—January 1881.]

MR. PINERO, who, as a member of Mr. Irving's company, has lent subordinate aid to sundry of the performances at the Lyceum Theatre, has also from time to time manifested skill as a playwright. His little comedies of “Bygones,” “Daisy's Escape,” and “Hester's Mystery” are works of no great pretence, but they have all been deservedly commended for their freshness, animation, and ingenuity. The actor-author has thus been encouraged to venture more ambitiously, and a two-act play of his contriving, entitled “The Money-Spinner,” and first produced at Manchester some two months ago, has now been promoted to the St. James's Theatre. Mr. Pinero invents his own plots and writes his own dialogue, while his practical acquaintance with the stage has enabled him so to shape and conduct his plays as to suit them to the recognised tastes and requirements of theatrical audiences. This last merit has, of course, its attendant defect; plays written by players are apt to resort to rather trite and

obviously artificial means of entertaining, and "The Money-Spinner" is not free from this infirmity; it is here and there too redolent of the stage-lamps. A more serious blemish arises from the nature of the story. The characters do not come upon the stage with what are technically known as "clean hands;" all, or nearly all, seemed to have dabbled in fraud or aided and abetted in the compounding of felony. The heroine cheats at cards; her father is a drunken blackleg; her sister, reproachable less for her morals than her manners, yet exhibits vulgarity of the most pronounced type. The hero is a clerk in a cotton factory who has embezzled money, while his father is something of a fraudulent bankrupt, and his most intimate friend is a disguised detective. Fortunately this corrupt assembly boasts a certain leaven of respectability because of the presence in its midst of a young Scotch nobleman, who is extremely foolish, but not absolutely immoral, save that he is very anxious to screen the criminals and to convert them into his dearest friends; he is even so unwise as to marry the heroine's vulgar sister; not that he loves her exactly, but because she presents some physical resemblance to the heroine, of whom he was once enamoured, but who rashly bestowed herself upon the embezzling clerk. These are not, perhaps, very promising personages to enlist in the service of comedy; but Mr. Pinero has employed them, I am bound to say, very cleverly, and has produced altogether a thoroughly effective work. "The Money-Spinner" in representation greatly pleased and interested the audience, something of course being due to the excellent support afforded by the St. James's company. Mr. Mackintosh particularly distinguished himself as the personator of the French detective, *Faubert*. Mr. Clayton played forcibly as the hero, who bears, by chance, the unlucky name of *Boycott*. As the Scotch nobleman and the dishonest, but afterwards penitent, heroine, Mr. and Mrs. Kendal were all that could be wished; while in the part of the veteran blackleg, *Baron Croodle*, Mr. Hare is admirably lively, eccentric, and droll.

CXLV.

"OTHELLO."

[Princess's Theatre.—January 1881.]

MR. BOOTH'S *Othello* did not satisfy expectation.* It is true that Mr. Booth's audience arrived at the theatre in so weather-beaten, not to say frost-bitten, a condition as to preclude fervid or enthusiastic views upon almost any subject; but after ample allowance has been made for adverse influence of this kind, the fact remains that the performance disappointed. Mr. Booth's *Othello* did not excite; it moved neither to terror nor to pity. Merits it displayed undoubtedly; yet these very merits were so urged and insisted upon as to assume sometimes the semblance of defects. Mr. Booth's art, as his *Othello* exhibits it, suffers seriously from over-elaboration and excess of anxiety; it is so studied as to appear to be without spontaneity: it is too deliberate; a sense of preparation and premeditation discounts, as it were, the actor's effects, and deprives them of all air of impulse; a love of emphasis leads to its injudicious distribution, until syllables gain prominence at the expense of sentences, and significance is sacrificed to excess of articulateness. A power of depicting passion Mr. Booth assuredly possesses, and when his fine voice is at its finest—it was not nearly at its finest when he first played *Othello* at the Princess's—it can discourse most eloquent and emotional music; nevertheless, tones of pathos and of tenderness lie less certainly within its compass. It may be, too, that reverence for tradition has affected injuriously Mr. Booth's *Othello*. For the stage *Othello*, even though he comes to us from the other side of the Atlantic, has not yet obtained complete emancipation from the traditions, the points, it may even be said the tricks, of Edmund Kean.

In the earlier scenes Mr. Booth is rather graceful and supple than stately and dignified; his lowness of stature and slightness of figure perhaps prohibit majesty of port or pretensions of aspect. His flowing robes may be some-

what too fantastic and variegated, but he wears them adroitly; he affects no Eastern composure or passiveness of manner, but he is alert, vivacious, restless, indulging in much expressive if somewhat redundant gesticulation. He takes care to manifest *Othello's* love for *Desdemona*, his scorn for the objurgations of *Brabantio*; and delivers his oration to the senate with admirable elocutionary art, if with an insufficient undercurrent of ardour. He wisely avoids that hurry to greet *Desdemona* in the council-chamber affected by some *Othellos*: she is a witness in the case, and must give her evidence impartially, free from suspicion of collusion with the accused; and his hearty asseveration, "My life upon her faith!" brings the scene to a close happily enough. In the second act, and during later portions of the play, the example of Edmund Kean may, I think, be traced, with unfortunate results. The dismissal of *Cassio*, for instance, is treated as a very solemn occasion: *Mr. Booth's* tones, mien, and action become alike portentous; it is to him one of the most important passages in the tragedy. Hazlitt describes Kean's manner at this point as "terrific, magnificent, prophetic." Yet the incident does not really need this prodigious sort of treatment. With regret, but as a matter of military duty, *Othello* makes, as he says, an example of *Cassio*, and reduces him to the ranks for brawling and drunkenness. But his offence is soon shown to be not so very grave after all; for, as *Emilia* relates at the beginning of the next act, *Othello* has protested he will take "the safest occasion by the front" to reinstate his officer. What need, therefore of the terrific, the magnificent, or the prophetic, in the method of sentencing him? Kean, as I judge, was in haste to arrive at his "flashes of lightning;" his signal histrionic genius was greatly aided by startling use of his extraordinary physical force, and he was wont to precipitate the whirlwinds and eruptions of his passion. *Othello* is wrathful—there is the first hint of the vehemence of his nature—when he fails to discover how the "foul rout" has begun; but after *Iago's* explanation he is calm again, and he proceeds to the just punishment of the offender. In like manner, the *Othello* of the stage yields too suddenly to the temptations of *Iago*; the train is no

sooner laid than it is fired and the mine exploded; the graduality of the villain's process is overlooked. Yet *Iago* himself is careful to point out that the "dangerous conceits" he distils into the mind of his victim resemble poisons—

" Which, at the first, are scarce found to distaste ;
But, with a little, act upon the blood,
Burn like the mines of sulphur."

It is not until his second interview with *Othello* that *Iago* describes him as "eaten up with passion." During their first converse *Othello* is uneasy, alarmed, distressed, greatly perplexed; then follows a pause; frenzy, epilepsy, madness, murder, and despair arrive by and by. *Iago's* insinuations are subtly ordered. He hints objection to *Cassio's* acquaintance with *Desdemona*, to the employment of him as a confidential agent, implying that he is not honest; then, by warning *Othello* against jealousy, intimates that he has the gravest reason to be jealous. It was, I think, at *Iago's* second utterance of the word "jealousy" that Mr. Booth's *Othello* took fire. The exclamation, "O misery!" he employed, it seemed to me, as a comment upon an abstract case submitted to him, which did not nearly concern him, however. But his first outburst of passion was not surpassed by the fury of the later and more desperate scenes. It may be objected, indeed, that the performance presented too sustained a monotone of rage, and that the actor insufficiently reserved his force for the crowning moments of the tragedy. He could but repeat his efforts, not transcend them; and the interest of the representation seemed thus to sink somewhat when most it should have risen. Hazlitt's charge against Edmund Kean is applicable to Mr. Edwin Booth: he is too constantly on the rack, too uniformly on the verge of extravagance; and speeches of pure pathos, thought, and feeling he treats too much as expressions of passion venting itself in violence of action, tone, and gesture. Moreover, Mr. Booth is apt to interpret overmuch: desirous that no word should lose its value, he seems to surcharge the text with meaning, to oppress it with superfluous comment of emphasis, action, and facial expression. Watching him, one longs sometimes

for a simpler histrionic method, the completer subjection of the player to the poet. But this defect is not peculiar to Mr. Booth.

I should state that the performance, though unsatisfactory when considered as a whole, had yet its valuable and interesting passages, and often evidenced much ingenuity of contrivance ; in the conduct of the last scene, for instance, the attack upon *Iago*, and the suicide of *Othello*. There was much noble declamation. The "Farewell" speech and the grand lines beginning, "Had it pleased Heaven to try me with affliction," were very finely delivered ; while, from Mr. Booth's exaltation of manner, the history of the handkerchief acquired a curious character of Oriental romanticism. The version of the tragedy employed by Mr. Booth seems to me no improvement upon the ordinary acting edition. The text is here and there restored, as in the case of *Othello's* speech, "Like to the Pontick sea ;" but there are important suppressions, among them great part of the first scene of the fourth act. The murder of *Roderigo* is represented ; but, strangely enough, the previous appearance of *Othello* upon the scene is dispensed with. And it is hard to account for the choice of the view of Cyprus, with its port and pier, and a background of tumbling sea, as the scene of the tempting of *Othello*, his jealousy and anguish. The same canvas had witnessed, but a little while before, the landing of *Othello* with his soldiers amid a crowd of acclaiming Cypriots.

CXLVI.

"OTHELLO."

[Princess's Theatre.—February 1881.]

As *Iago*, Mr. Edwin Booth obtains far more favour than was accorded to his earlier Shakspearean assumptions in London, *Hamlet* and *Othello*. *Iago*, the critics have told us, may be played in two ways : either as a patent villain, whose wickedness is writ large upon his countenance, expressed strongly in his every glance and scowl, posture

and gesture; or as a gay light-hearted monster, careless, cordial, comfortable—the *Iago* indeed, of Edmund Kean, according to Hazlitt's account of his performance. But I do not know that Mr. Booth's *Iago* can be so distinctly classed and dismissed. Of course the actor does not depict the character in "the glaring colours and with the ponderous strokes affected upon our stage in times past; but neither does he convert *Iago* into "a pattern of comic gaiety and good-humour." He is very vivacious and voluble; he wears an Italian look, and indulges in an Italian ease and variety, significance and profuseness of gesticulation; he is very quick of movement, light and lithe of figure, with yet a certain soldierly trimness and smartness of presence; the only advertisement of his iniquitous disposition is to be read, perhaps, in his Mephistophelean crimson-peaked hat and curling feather. There is little gaiety in his manner, however; he laughs and jests, but in a mocking, malignant spirit, with a sub-current of bitterness and venom. It was fairly charged against Mr. Fechter's *Iago* that at intervals he seemed to borrow something too much of the levity of *Figaro*. Mr. Booth's performance is not open to any such reproach. His *Iago* passes as "a lively bottle-companion," justifies in some degree his designation of "honest," because of his outspoken air, his apparent preference for rudeness of speech, his rough jests and coarse sallies, his cynical frankness, that can upon occasion descend to absolute brutality; but even his sprightlier moods are attended by grim shadows, or may be said to cast sinister reflections. The performance is altogether remarkable for its consistency, its force, its finish and subtlety. I can remember no *Iago* at once so natural and plausible, so intellectual and so terrible. Mr. Booth distinguishes finely between *Iago's* manner when he is engaged in his familiar converse with *Roderigo* and when he stands in the presence of *Othello*. With his poor dupe, the "silly gentleman," *Iago* does not need much artifice, cares little about concealing his own vileness of nature; he is abrupt enough in his cruel gibes and calumnies, soils and degrades every subject he touches upon; but more warily, with a pretended sense of reserve and refinement, he proceeds to ensnare and destroy his nobler victim. There is something convincing about the natural air of

reluctance and hesitation with which he first directs suspicion towards *Desdemona*; he seems anxious to defend her while the more he is accusing her. In like manner in an earlier scene, affecting to exculpate *Cassio*, he had with greater completeness secured his disgrace. Mr. Booth's *Iago* pervades the tragedy like an incarnation of the Evil Principle. He is detestable throughout, and yet most interesting; he is busily maleficent, steps lightly, half willingly, half urged by circumstance, from crime to crime, the master-mind of the story, with the other characters but as puppets in his hand, moving only when he jerks their strings. Mr. Booth insists upon *Iago's* hatred of the *Moor*, the while he dwells little upon the alleged reason for that hatred. *Iago's* jealousy is offered but as a faint excuse for his sins, hardly worthy of serious consideration. *Emilia* has become contemptible and odious to him. Can he really credit that *Othello* and *Cassio* both have "worn his nightcap," as he grossly intimates? Or does he say so merely by way of salving a conscience that has usually dispensed with "flattering unction" of that kind?

Mr. Booth delivers his soliloquies admirably, and the character he represents is much developed by means of soliloquy. For the most part, he avoids the error, to which *Iagos* are prone, of addressing the audience, taking them into confidence too directly. Only once, I think, did I detect him in that stage trick, which even *Mr. Puff* deprecated, of "springing off with a glance at the pit." Mr. Booth, however, suffers much from the feebleness of his playfellows. Mr. Forrester, a painstaking and conscientious performer no doubt, has obtained much applause for an artistic forbearance which seems really the result of a natural tameness and apathy of constitution. As *Othello*, gorgeous in gold lace and crimson-cotton velvet as an old-fashioned pulpit, he is ludicrously incapable. He has no passion at command, he seems not susceptible of excitement even; he can only depict the frenzy of *Othello* by a mechanical swaying of the arms and by clamorous employment of a rather flat-toned voice. *Iago's* poisonous insinuations might as well have been poured into the ears of a carved figure on a ship's prow, or addressed to a tavern signboard of the Saracen's Head. Mr. Booth appeared to

be labouring to lay and light a train of gunpowder which all his efforts could only induce to fizz, never to flame. Miss Milton is a very poor *Desdemona*. There is some promise, however, about Mr. Redmund's *Cassio*, while I need hardly say that Mr. Ryder and Mrs. Vezin are adequate representatives of *Brabantio* and *Emilia*. The stage arrangements have now been amended: a garden scene has been substituted for that view of the port of Cyprus which, as I noted, did duty in the third and fourth acts of the tragedy when Mr. Booth appeared as *Othello*.

CXLVII.

"THE COLONEL."

[Prince of Wales's Theatre.—February 1881.]

THE comedy of "*Le Mari à la Campagne*," by M. Bayard, has long been known to our stage as "*The Serious Family*;" it seemed to be a French version of Murphy's "*Way to Keep Him*," which, in its turn, I think, owned a foreign original. Mr. Burnand has now taken the familiar work in hand; and freely exercising his own invention, humour, and ingenuity, has produced at the Prince of Wales's Theatre one of the most entertaining of modern plays. "*The Colonel*," as it is called, deals in caricature: its predecessors did no less. But whereas they satirised religious intolerance and excess of Puritanism, Mr. Burnand has chosen for his theme that air of æsthetic intensity, those artistic affectations, which are classed among the fashionable foibles of the time. The topic has the great merit of being entirely new to the stage. The dramatist would deride the devotees of the dado and the frieze; the worshippers of sage-green hues, of blue-and-white china, of draggled skirts of neutral tint; the amateurs who find the sublime and the beautiful, the objects of their adoration, in such simple things as the sunflower, the daffodil, the lily, the dandelion, and the peacock's feather. No doubt the satire is rather broad than subtle, and has recourse occasionally to exceeding exaggeration.

tion ; but it is not without its leaven of wholesomeness : it is founded upon truth, and assuredly, exhibited upon the stage, it greatly enlivens and amuses. Mr. Burnand has provided a sufficiency of smart and witty dialogue, resting now and then upon an old joke, as though to recover breath for a new flight ; and the sallies of the dramatist are glibly delivered by the players. As the American Colonel, who figured as an Irish captain in the old times, when the late James Wallack played in "The Serious Family" upon the stage of the Haymarket Theatre, Mr. Coghlan particularly distinguishes himself. His acting is altogether remarkable for its ease and self-possession, natural humour and spirit. Other members of the company are also seen to advantage. Miss Amy Roselle is graceful and vivacious as *Mrs. Blyth*, the sprightly widow, who entertains the hen-pecked husband, and afterwards finds a second mate for herself in the American Colonel ; while as *Lady Tomkins*, the alderman's relict, who has abandoned herself to æsthetic excesses, Mrs. Leigh Murray is highly amusing. As *Olive*, the young wife, Miss Myra Holme demonstrates great professional advance. Mr. Herbert appears as the erring husband ; and Mr. Fernandez plays with force, if with some lack of unction, the part of the impostor, *Lambert Streyke*. The success of the representation was never a moment in question. A long course of prosperity is probably in store for "The Colonel."

CXLVIII.

"KING LEAR."

[Princess's Theatre.—February 1881.]

MR. BOOTH's success as *Lear* has been almost unqualified. The performance is remarkable for its elaboration, refinement, and subtlety ; for its force, passion, and tenderness ; and the expression of tenderness, it may be noted, has sometimes seemed unduly absent from the actor's impersonations. But Mr. Booth's voice has suffered, either from the influence of the weather or from the stress of his

nightly exertions; the symptoms of over-fatigue are too evident; his grand tones do not always come when he calls for them, his declamation has lost resonance, and his special gifts as an elocutionist prove to him of much less avail than usual. Mr. Booth has thus been unable to render full justice to himself and his intentions. He has powerfully affected his audience, however, by the picturesque, the artistic symmetry and consistency, the absolute abandonment of his representation of the character. There have been more dignified *Lears*, perhaps, although *Lear's* dignity is less an attribute of the man than of his position; but few actors can have rendered at once so forcibly, and yet with such minute finish,—due regard being had, of course, to the requirements of histrionic effect,—the physical and mental infirmities of *Lear*, his senile peevishness and peremptoriness, his ungovernable wrath, his vengeful frenzy, his terrible despair, and most pathetic death. In the whole range of tragedy there is nothing more pitiful than this scene of this death of *Lear*, from exhaustion of nature, from excess of suffering and of sorrow, with the body of his murdered *Cordelia* clasped in his arms. Mr. Booth treats this portion of the play with admirable delicacy and feeling. Altogether it cannot be doubted that his *Lear* has claims to be accounted as the finest of his Shakspearian performances. And this, I believe, is the judgment upon the subject of the critics, his compatriots.

“King Lear” has not been seen upon our stage for some years, and probably many are now making their first acquaintance with the work as an acting play. It was Macready who first rescued the original text from the state of degradation and mutilation to which Nahum Tate had reduced it; the wretched acting version of 1681 had, indeed, been adopted in turns by all the great actors, from Betterton, Barton Booth, Quin, Garrick, and Barry, down to John Kemble and Edmund Kean inclusive. Macready's example was followed by Mr. Phelps and Mr. Charles Kean, and of course the tragedy is now presented in its integrity, with such suppressions only as seem dictated by the exigencies of performance and by modern taste. It is difficult to believe that the dreadful scene of the plucking

out of *Gloster's* eyes could ever have been exhibited on the stage at any time; the barbarous episode is more worthy of Webster than of Shakspeare. "King Lear" has been claimed by some writers as the poet's greatest work, "for its diversity and contrast of character, for its combining the storm of Nature with the passions of man." In the theatre however, "King Lear" is, perhaps, the least popular of the great tragedies. Interest can hardly be given in performance to the troubles of *Gloster* and his sons—the weak reflection, as it were, of *Lear's* sufferings at the hands of his daughters; nor do the villanies of *Edmund* and the adulterous loves of *Goneril* and *Regan* impress very deeply. These deficiencies may be due in a measure, however, to imperfect representation; and few dramatic companies can ever have been strong enough to give adequate interpretation to the many characters of importance that take part in "King Lear." Junius Brutus Booth, the father of Mr. Edwin Booth, was fortunate when, playing *Lear* at Covent Garden in 1820, he obtained the support of Macready as *Edmund* and of Charles Kemble as *Edgar*. Now, at the Princess's, Mr. Edwin Booth has to be content with very feeble coadjutors. But the days of strong casts are over, especially in relation to what is known as the "legitimate drama." Our younger players have been afforded few opportunities of appearing in Shakspeare; and this fact has to be taken into account when the rawness and poverty of the representation at the Princess's are considered. The veteran Mr. Ryder, whose acting is invariably distinguished by certain sterling qualities, who was Macready's *Gloster* in 1845, and Charles Kean's *Edgar* in 1858, now appears creditably as Mr. Booth's *Kent*; and there is something to be said for Mr. Charles's performance of the *Fool*, a part that has often been assigned to an actress. Otherwise the players at the Princess's engaged in the representation of "King Lear" do not invite comment of a favourable sort.

CXLIX.¹

"ROMEO AND JULIET."

[Court Theatre.—March 1881.]

"ROMEO AND JULIET" has been carefully reproduced with new and tasteful scenery, dresses, and decorations, in order that Madame Modjeska, for the first time in London, might appear as the heroine of the tragedy. The ambition which has prompted the actress to this essay is intelligible, and even creditable, enough ; but the risk of disaster was very great ; and it must be said at once that Madame Modjeska's *Juliet* failed to satisfy those who did not attend the theatre well provided with ready-made raptures, and predetermined to approve and applaud in any case. To the foreign player, the Shakspearian drama is, in almost every instance, a sealed book. The personation of *Juliet* is a task lying beyond the limits of Madame Modjeska's means ; in the whole poetic repertory, she could scarcely have lighted upon a character less suited to her physique, temperament, and histrionic method. Of course it is not to be expected that the *Juliet* of the stage can be as youthful as the *Juliet* of the poet : "Come Lammas-eve at night shall she be fourteen ;" but there is a maturity of manner that is almost as disadvantageous to the interpreter of *Juliet* as maturity of aspect. Madame Modjeska's art does not enable her to represent artlessness, is too sophisticated to depict simplicity ; she cannot conceal the processes of preparation, elaboration, and effort upon which her histrionic portraitures depend ; she is a conventional and artificial actress, gifted, graceful, and accomplished, well qualified to present the heroines of modern drama, able at times to display vehemence of a special kind, but absolutely incompetent to cope with the heroines of Shakspeare. These, it may be said, are as creatures of another and a nobler world, far removed from the confines of her dramatic experience. As *Juliet* her airs of ingenuousness become almost grimaces, her smiles degenerate into

smirks; she would render the juvenility of the character by crossing the stage now and again with a certain skipping, ambling, skittish gait; she cannot reconcile the apparent inconsistency of *Juliet's* intensity of passion and innateness of purity. In her hands *Juliet's* love for *Romeo* declines into an intrigue; it is attended by so much calmness and calculation, it is so completely made a matter of deliberation and self-consciousness. Of the wild transport of sudden love, the intoxication of a first passion, no suggestions are forthcoming. The *Juliet* of the Court Theatre is a clever woman of the world, a drawing-room ornament, skilled in the arts of dress and deportment, whose love is leavened by worldly wisdom, who shrinks from any excess of the "purple light" lest it should be found unbecoming to her complexion, whose devotion to *Romeo* does not exclude regard for herself, who pertains much more to the Boulevards than to the bard of Avon. In fine, Madame Modjeska's *Juliet* lacks youth and truth, nature, freshness, passion, and poetry.

Upon the lady's nationality and foreign accent it is now, perhaps, needless to dwell; but of course in a tragedy of Shakspeare's these are disadvantages of an insuperable kind. No doubt the fact that Madame Modjeska is required to speak a tongue that is strange to her robs *Juliet's* utterances of much of their spontaneity and impulsiveness, imposes a superfluous circumspection and cautiousness of manner; many of the more fervid speeches thus assuming the character of quiet and collected recitations. The actress can only impart warmth to them by hurrying them into unintelligibility, and reducing passages of the finest poetry in the language to the rudest prose, to a mere pulp, so to speak, of wrong emphasis, false accent, and mispronunciation. At times, indeed, it seemed questionable whether Madame Modjeska herself understood the speeches she failed so completely to render comprehensible to her audience. Of applause, it is only fair to say, there was an adequate supply, if of genuine enthusiasm there was little evidence. But, to my thinking, the *Juliet* of the popular Polish actress is altogether an inferior and unsatisfactory performance. Mr. Forbes Robertson proved himself a crude but zealous *Romeo*. Mr. Wilson Barrett, an

adroit elocutionist, well versed in all the traditions of the part, won much favour by his spirited representation of *Mercutio*.

CL.

THE "HAMLET" OF 1603.

[St. George's Hall,—April 1881.]

THE quarto "Hamlet" of 1603, of which a copy was accidentally discovered sixty years since in Sir Thomas Hanmer's library at Barton, has been usually accounted a piratical, imperfect, stunted, botched, and corrupt edition of the tragedy: curious and interesting to antiquaries and Shakspearian students, but to the general public valueless enough. Certain sages or wiseacres, however, encouraged by sundry supersubtle German commentators, have made this wretched abortion of a book almost an object of adoration. They conceive it to be the poet's first draft of his play, and further to be prized because it is, as they maintain, more coherent, compact, intelligible, and dramatically effective than the later and lengthier editions. The world has been at fault in admiring, during so many years, the "Hamlet" of 3891 lines; it should accord its preference to the "Hamlet" of 2143 lines. Shakspeare injured his work by augmenting it; his second thoughts were not so good as his first; his additions should be cancelled; and we should return to the first text, its poverty and clumsiness, its execrable blank verse, its garbled lines and general slovenliness and debility notwithstanding! These are the arguments of the advocates of the early "Hamlet," who further specially insist upon the fact that certain sentences of importance, as they allege—making clearer, for instance, the innocence of *Queen Gertrude*, and redeeming, in part, the character of *Laertes*—find a place only in the edition of 1603. The whole subject cannot, of course, be conveniently discussed here. I must be content with stating once more, that without doubt Shakspeare, after his manner, founded his "Hamlet" upon an older and ruder play dealing with the same story, not now extant, which had certainly been acted

before 1590; and that the edition of 1603, being surreptitiously concocted of shorthand notes taken during performance, with the assistance of certain of the players' parts imperfectly copied, also contained some few passages of the primitive original tragedy, which Shakspeare did not think it necessary to include in his play, or, having once included, afterwards discarded. The majority of readers will surely find it impossible to believe that the author of "Romeo and Juliet" and "A Midsummer Night's Dream," plays written probably about 1590, could some twelve years later have been guilty of perpetrating, even as a "first draft," so unscholarly, awkward, and even uncouth, a work as the "Hamlet" of 1603.

Nevertheless, this early and addled edition of "Hamlet" has been subjected to the test of stage representation. A company of ladies and gentlemen have taken pains to commit to memory the muddled and mangled text, and have attempted to personate the characters in the tragedy. It would be invidious to dwell upon their efforts. The exhibition was necessarily of a very incomplete kind: it was denied scenery and musical accompaniment; and probably interfered with nobody's convictions or opinions upon the subject. The worshippers of the corrupt play will no doubt continue to worship it, nor indeed should their faith be changed because of the weakness of the interpretation ventured by the amateurs. The attitude of the general audience was one of apathy tinged by a disposition to deride. Some derived amusement from the appearance of their old friend *Polonius* with the new name of *Corambis*, from hearing *Laertes* called *Leartes*, and from finding the spelling of *Ophelia* changed to *Ofelia*; considerable stir attending the entry upon the stage of *Fortenbrasse*, a character usually omitted from ordinary acting editions of the tragedy. But to many the performance was very wearisome and depressing; while a strong feeling prevailed that, upon the whole, the experiment was of an absurd and reprehensible sort, involving, as it did necessarily, some degradation of the poet in whose honour it purported to be undertaken.

CLI.

"OTHELLO."

[Lyceum Theatre.—May 1881.]

THE "special performance" of "Othello" with Mr. Booth as the hero of the tragedy, Mr. Irving as *Iago*, and Miss Ellen Terry as *Desdemona*, fluttered playgoing society very considerably. Altogether the experiment succeeded perfectly; enthusiastic approval of all concerned was the order of the night; the efforts of the players were rewarded with unlimited applause. Of Mr. Booth's *Othello* I had occasion to write some few weeks since, when he assumed the character at the Princess's Theatre, being supported rather inefficiently. Of course he is seen to more advantage at the Lyceum: Mr. Irving is both a heedful and a liberal manager, and does not spare pains or money in his resolve to secure the general completeness of the representations upon his stage. But Mr. Booth's *Othello* is not to be classed among his best efforts. It is an intelligent, scholarly, conscientious, zealous impersonation, with here and there certain very fine moments; but it fails to convince or to satisfy wholly. It is laboured, overcharged with details, it moves on but tardily; a desire for excess of finish has involved a sacrifice of breadth and force; or the actor's habitual pausings, his deliberateness of method, are to be explained by the necessity he is under of husbanding and economising his means and rallying his strength. For the performance of *Othello* is quite as much a physical as an intellectual question. Shakspeare's *Moor* needs to be gifted with an extraordinary constitution, lungs that will not weary, and tones that cannot flatten, not to mention peculiar qualifications of aspect and mien. The tragedy has been rarely played of late years, or has been played under inconvenient conditions: a thoroughly competent representative of *Othello* being absent from the scene. It may be asked, indeed, whether, since the times of Edmund Kean, a generally accepted *Othello* has been forthcoming? With Macready's *Othello* great fault was found; Gustavus Brooke

was rather an actor with a grand voice than a grand actor; the efforts of Charles Kean, Phelps, and Fechter in the part are hardly worth considering; while to Signor Salvini's performance the fatal objection has to be made that he appeared in a foreign translation of the play, and spoke a language which probably Shakspeare himself did not understand. And a further difficulty in the way of representing "Othello" has arisen from the modern demand for what is known as naturalness of manner upon the stage. The players are required to be easy, colloquial, and familiar, even to the verge of vulgarity: *Polonius's* counsels to the contrary notwithstanding. The ear of our playgoers is unaccustomed to oratory; the stage of to-day knows little of the torrent, tempest, and whirlwind of tragic passion. Now "Othello" is hardly to be played as, for instance, a comedy by the late Mr. Robertson is treated upon the stage. The *Moor's* utterances cannot be reduced to a conversational level. He is grandiloquent of speech, as he is stately of bearing. He must declaim, he cannot simply talk; and when his moments of frenzy arrive, when he is required to exclaim, "Whip me, ye devils!" "Roast me in sulphur!" and so on, I think his listeners must prepare to hear from him something very like ranting. *Othello* is fairly mad at last: should he not rave? I have little doubt that Edmund Kean's *Othello* raved and ranted very freely indeed. In fine, the poetic drama of the past can only be revived upon the understanding that the actors are permitted a certain heroic or exalted manner, both of bearing and locution, which would clearly be unsuited to a play of modern date. In Shakspeare's tragedies, as in classical statuary, humanity is sublimated; the modern drama does not work in marble, but rather in terra-cotta, in clay, or even putty: it employs very inferior materials.

Mr. Irving's exertions as *Iago* were very favourably received by the audience; his success, indeed, was quite beyond question. And yet, it seems to me, that in some respects his manner of performance will bear revision. Something too much I found of the strut and swagger, the attitudinising of melodrama, with a confirmed restlessness of deportment that was certainly disturbing to the spectators. As Verges would be talking, so Mr. Irving's *Iago* would be

doing and moving. He could not—at any rate he did not—stand still for a moment; his hands were ever busy, now with this “property,” now with that. Of course these are minor defects, which the actor is very likely to amend in his future performances. Nor need much stress be laid upon the eccentricity which has marked his choice of dress. So far as I know, there is no warrant discoverable for attiring *Iago* as something between a Spanish bull-fighter and an Italian bandit. These objections admitted, Mr. Irving is to be heartily congratulated: his *Iago* is one of his happiest impersonations; vigorous, subtle, ingenious, individual, an altogether impressive histrionic achievement. By and by his *Iago* may be accounted as his most complete Shakspearian assumption.

As *Desdemona*, Miss Ellen Terry was very charming of aspect, as, indeed, she never fails to be: she was, moreover, graceful, tender, and pathetic. But she suffered, I think, from the nervousness of the occasion, and seemed sometimes less completely absorbed in the character she personated than she is usually. And she should be cautioned against permitting her *Desdemona*, even in her moments of severest suffering, to fling herself upon the bosom of *Iago*, and to accept the consolation of his embraces and caresses. The wives of commanding officers are not, or should not be, wont thus to accept comfort at the hands of subalterns; for it must be remembered that *Iago* is only an ensign, and but twenty-eight years old, as he himself announces. Mr. Terriss I class among the best representatives of *Cassio* I have ever known; and it is only right to note how carefully and cleverly certain of the minor characters were sustained: *Roderigo* by Mr. Pinero; the *Duke* by Mr. Beaumont; and *Ludovico* by Mr. Hudson.

CLII.

"JUANA."

[Court Theatre.—May 1881.]

MR. WILLS'S new four-act play of "Juana" is a work of an old-fashioned sort, and may fairly be classed with such productions as Lord Beaconsfield's "Alarcos" or the tragedies of "Monk" Lewis. Nothing so doleful or so dreadful as "Juana" has been seen upon the stage for many years. Mr. Wills has laboured to accumulate horrors upon horror's head. The story might be borrowed from Mrs. Radcliffe, it deals so largely in the mysterious, the romantic, and the criminal. There is a want of nature about the characters, while the incidents are remarkable both for their incoherence and their improbability. *Juana* is the child of a murdered father, and the circumstances of his death have rendered her liable to attacks of insanity. She becomes the wife of a foppish nobleman, *Don Carlos de Narcisso*, who plays her false; her dearest friend, *Clara Perez*, a lady of unvirtuous character and the vaguest social position, being his partner in sin. *Juana's* disappointment and distress at the discovery of this perfidy induce a fit of mental aberration, and she promptly murders her husband. The crime is committed in the presence of a Franciscan friar, who has long loved *Juana* in secret. That her life may not be forfeit, the friar protests that she is innocent, and avows himself the assassin of *Don Carlos*. A scene follows in which the corpse of the murdered man is borne in upon a bier, and the ordeal by touch is exhibited: all suspected of the homicide are compelled to approach and lay hands upon the fatal wound. The friar, to obtain his own conviction as a murderer, secretly stabs himself in the hand, and, having touched the body, displays his bleeding fingers to the spectators. He is sentenced to be buried alive—bricked up in the wall of the crypt of his monastery. From this fearful doom, however, he is spared by the timely return to reason of *Juana*, and by her last dying speech and confession that the guilt was really hers. These

sombre and calamitous events are supposed to occur in the neighbourhood of Toledo about the year 1496. Costumes and scenery of great artistic beauty embellish the drama, and some attempt has been made to relieve its graver and ghastlier incidents by the introduction of comic characters: a malapert page, a coquettish waiting-woman, and a gluttonous monk of the Friar Tuck order. It struck me, however, that the lighter passages, although in themselves unobjectionable enough and pleasantly intended, had the effect of intensifying the general gloom and rendering the shocking nature of the story still more shocking; they were as much out of place, indeed, as conundrums and comic songs would be at a funeral. While the murder of the husband and the madness of the wife were still fresh events, attempts to provoke laughter seemed both irritating and insulting to the audience.

Mr. Wills has manifested but inferior art in the construction of his tragedy, and has overburdened it with words. Such interest as the story possesses is slow to reveal itself, and the earlier scenes suffer from the absence of action and animation. Laudably anxious to impart something of literary value to his work, Mr. Wills has supplied an excess of artificial language and conventional blank verse. Although scarcely to be ranked as a poet, he has much quasi-poetic diction at command, and a desire to preserve a certain loftiness of locution has betrayed him at times into diffuseness and verbosity. If so dismal and disagreeable a play as "*Juana*" is to secure popularity, it must be at the sacrifice of many speeches and much dialogue, upon which it may be Mr. Wills has expended considerable pains. But "*Juana*" is only to be commended to those prepared to accept "funeral baked meats" as furnishing forth an appetising sort of dramatic repast.

Madame Modjeska has but a limited command of pathetic expression, or the tragedy, from its nature, makes little appeal to sympathy and sensibility. The actress, however, is very graceful and accomplished, and plays *Juana* with excellent art. The scenes of hysteria and lunacy which precede and follow the murder of *Don Carlos* are rendered with exceptional power and abandonment, winning from the audience enthusiastic applause. In other

portions of the play Madame Modjeska seemed rather trammelled by the long speeches Mr. Wills has required her to deliver; and the exhibition of insanity in the third act was certainly too protracted both for artist and audience: the result was monotony and wearisomeness. Mr. Forbes Robertson proved himself a satisfactory representative of *Don Carlos*, murdered in the second act; and Mr. Wilson Barrett, by means of his dignity of bearing and adroit elocution, lent significance and value to the arduous and ungrateful character of the amorous Franciscan, *Friar John*. The minor parts were well and carefully sustained.

CLIII.

"OTHELLO."

[Lyceum Theatre.—May 1881.]

AFTER three performances of "Othello," with Mr. Booth as the *Moor* and Mr. Irving as *Iago*, the cast has been changed or reversed, without, however, much abatement of public interest or curiosity in the matter. Mr. Booth has appeared as *Iago* and Mr. Irving as *Othello*. Of Mr. Booth's *Iago* I had occasion to write admiringly when he assumed the character at the Princess's Theatre some weeks since; his *Iago*, indeed, was then generally pronounced to be his most successful Shakspearian essay; and assuredly the actor gains by the superior conditions under which he performs at the Lyceum: he is supported by skilled players, and the stage equipments are most complete. Very hearty applause rewarded his exertions; again and again he was summoned before the curtain to receive the congratulations of his audience. As *Othello*, Mr. Irving has not, I think, been seen in London since the year 1876, when his impersonation obtained only a qualified sort of success. For he seemed at that time to have but an incomplete control over his resources, was often carried away by his own vehemence, was at times tempted to tear his passion to tatters, to very rags, and

lapsed into curious excesses of manner and speech. In the interval, however, Mr. Irving has become a practised interpreter of Shakspeare; he is now a far more disciplined performer than he was five years ago; his art has been tempered and chastened; he is able to concentrate his forces, and to endow his efforts with a completer sense of climax. That his *Othello* is wholly satisfying I do not pretend to say; but certainly his performance exhibits fewer defects, is altogether more sustained and even than once it was. His chief success was obtained in the earlier scenes, when, if he betrayed a disposition too frequently to "take the stage," as the technical term has it, and paced and promenaded about over-much, as though he liked to hear the rustling behind him of his gorgeous silken robes, he was yet impressive, self-contained, and stately. His love for *Desdemona* struck me as rather sentimentally expressed, his uxoriousness was of a very pronounced sort: in a very public manner, heedless of the opinions and the presence of bystanders, he lavished the most rapturous and doting of embraces and caresses upon his young bride, hurried to meet her ere she entered the council-chamber—as though she were a dangerous witness against him, and he desired to school her as to the evidence she should give the court—and afterwards held her veil for her with rather an effeminate air of affection and obsequiousness the while she delivered her first speech to her father. But he declaimed well, addressed the senate with excellent art, bore with dignity the charges and the wrath of *Brabantio*, and afterwards acquitted himself with distinction in the scene of *Cassio's* brawling and degradation at Cyprus. Nor could fault fairly be found with his manner of listening to the first insinuations and temptations of *Iago*. He was careful to avoid that eagerness to suspect the fidelity of *Desdemona*, to which the tragedians of the past were prone; he finely exhibited *Othello's* reluctance to doubt, his struggles with his own misgivings and alarms. In later passages of *Othello's* passion, his extremity of perplexity, his leonine fury, his demoniac frenzy, his exquisite pathos and dreadful despair: the outward forms, modes, and shows of grief, anguish, and abandonment were present, but something of

the terrible inward and mental suffering seemed but imperfectly suggested. At times, too, in his anxiety to avoid the inarticulateness of rant, the actor fell into the opposite error of drawling, adopted an artificial system of speech, and doled out his words with a sort of sepulchral monotony of effect, as though he were striving to imitate a pulpit manner of the worst kind. But throughout he played intelligently, anxiously, artistically, with indeed the utmost desire to spare himself in no way, to render every justice he possibly could to the part he had undertaken; and his exertions were rewarded, as they deserved to be, by cordial and prolonged applause. His method of costume, it may be noted, has undergone revision. He now appears arrayed in much magnificence of a barbaric sort: jewels sparkle in his turban and depend from his ears, strings of pearls circle his dusky throat, he is abundantly possessed of gold and silver ornaments, and his richly-brocaded robes fall about him in the most lustrous and ample folds. He is blacker of face than the *Othello* of the stage has ventured to be since the times of Macready, and altogether he presents as superb an appearance as an Eastern king pictured by Paolo Veronese. It may be, indeed, that the actor has laid too much stress both upon the luxury and gorgeousness, as upon the Orientalism, of his apparel. As a naturalised Venetian in the employment of the State, it may be urged that *Othello* was more likely to assume the dress of his adopted country, to appear clothed as a civilised European of the sixteenth century.

The *Desdemona* of Miss Ellen Terry is now one of her most charming performances; very sympathetic, graceful, and picturesque. And I note that when Mr. Booth is her *Iago*, Miss Terry's *Desdemona* does not permit herself to fall weeping upon his bosom or to find consolation in his soothing endearments.

CLIV.

"YOUTH."

[Drury Lane Theatre.—August 1881.]

THE new "sensational and domestic" drama of "Youth," which Messrs. Paul Meritt and Augustus Harris have contrived for Drury Lane Theatre, hardly equals the famous play of "The World," supplied a year ago by the same authors to the same establishment. "Youth" has been liberally and even luxuriously equipped for representation; there are scenic effects in abundance; altogether much ingenuity has been expended, strenuous efforts made to illude and startle the spectators. Yet it must be said that the result was rather disappointing: "Youth" certainly seemed deficient in freshness, and upon the whole, somewhat dull. The new play resembles one of those modern new houses which are made of old bricks; if the shape boasts any novelty, the materials are trite and familiar enough. Reminiscences of Mr. Boucicault's "Formosa" haunt the earlier scenes of "Youth;" and by and by there seems to have been borrowing from the military spectacles of Astley's Amphitheatre, from the melodramas of crime and prison life of Mr. Watts Phillips and Mr. Charles Reade—"Not Guilty" and "It is Never too Late to Mend." Even the great scene in "Youth," of the departure of the troop-ship *Serapis*, had been foreshadowed in the late Mr. Robertson's drama of "For Love," which dealt, among other things, with the tragedy of the wreck of the *Birkenhead*.

"Youth" sets forth, in eight acts or tableaux, a sort of modernised "Rake's Progress," much embellished, and well provided with the opportunities dear to stage-directors and carpenters, costumiers and scene-painters. Mr. Augustus Harris, the lessee and manager of the theatre, personates the hero of the story, assumes a variety of dresses, and otherwise distinguishes himself in the course of the performance. *Frank Darlington*, as the young man is called, has fallen a prey to the arts of a beautiful but

unprincipled French lady, who owns the sparkling name of *Eve de Malvoisie*. By some means, intelligible to the dramatists possibly, *Frank* is made to seem guilty of the crime of forgery, although in truth wholly innocent, and becomes the inmate of a convict prison. Obtaining presently a ticket-of-leave, he enlists in a marching regiment, and is held to redeem his character and regain his social position by reason of his great display of valour at some distant place called Hawk's Point, vaguely fighting against the Afghans or the Boers, it was not quite clear which. Other characters of course occupy the scene at intervals. Mr. Ryder personates with much solemnity an elderly clergyman, the father of *Frank Darlington*—the *Rev. Joseph Darlington, Vicar of Beechley*—who, though very respectable, and even venerable in his age, had it seems gone sadly astray as a young man, and is now punished for his transgressions by the reappearance, after a lapse of thirty years, of a vindictive widow—one *Mrs. Walsingham*, who ought to have been *Mr. Darlington's* wife, but was not—who deals much in irony and makes money by usury, and avenges what she considers to be her wrongs by hastening the ruin of the Vicar's son *Frank*. The wicked *Eve de Malvoisie* is also aided and abetted in her malefactions by one *Randal Reckley*, a vicious major in *Frank Darlington's* regiment. A convenient convict, *Tom Gardham*, appears in the later scenes, and proves himself the first husband of *Eve de Malvoisie*, just as *Frank Darlington* is regretting the indiscretion of which he had been guilty in taking to wife that heartless, worthless, but well-dressed and fascinating young woman. *Frank Darlington* is also supported by a stern-looking but excellent mother, well played by *Mrs. Billington*, and a virtuous and forgiving, if rather insipid cousin, *Miss Alice Wenlock*, who becomes the second wife of the unfortunate young man; while *Larry O'Pheysey*, a comic Irishman, is privileged to present himself unexpectedly in various guises at any period when the play seemed subsiding too completely into gloominess. Many such periods occurred, and a good deal—perhaps too much—was therefore seen of this *Larry O'Pheysey*. I must say that, to my thinking, Mr. Harry Jackson succeeds very much less as a comic Irishman than as a comic Jew.

"Youth" may probably answer the expectations of its producers. If the story is weak and the language puerile, and generally the work is of absurd and trashy quality, there are yet scenic exhibitions in "Youth" such as a large section of the public regards with fond admiration. It is thoroughly understood that the plays at Drury Lane are things rather to be looked at than listened to, and that the theatre thrives as the special home of "spectacular" effects. It is many years since George Colman wrote of the vast dimensions of the two patent houses, and their fitness merely for scenic magnificence:—

" When people appear
Quite unable to hear
'Tis undoubtedly needless to talk,"—

adding,

" 'Twere better they began
On the new invented plan,
And with telegraphs transmitted us the plot."

There was perhaps little that was worth hearing in "Youth," and the players, though often exhorted by the gallery to "speak up," were for the most part unskilled in the art of elocution, and frequently failed to make audible the diffuse dialogue they were charged to deliver. It may be for this reason that many passages of the drama escaped the efforts of the audience to comprehend them, and the story at times assumed an air of confusion and incoherence. The earlier scenes were inanimate and tedious enough, and it was not until *Frank Darlington* was discovered as a convict that much interest of a dramatic kind attached to his adventures. But the embarkation of the troops at Portsmouth and the battle fought at Hawk's Point by innumerable well-drilled supernumeraries, these were excellent displays of stage art, and roused the audience to special enthusiasm. The lavish use of blank-cartridges by the British forces, however, so filled the house with noises, fumes, and odours, that by the more sedate spectators the victory of our arms was strongly felt to be very dearly purchased. The view of the village of Beechley, with a railway train passing over the distant country, and the shifting panorama of the Upper Thames, were accepted as

signal achievements on the part of the scene-painter, Mr. Hicks; while the appearance of Mr. Harris in boating-dress, paddling a canoe in a wild waste of Thames water, with artificial swans, curving their necks in a highly natural manner, attendant on him, and the river-banks flying past to demonstrate the energy and rapidity of his movements, —this won almost the most rapturous applause of the evening. The room of Oriental aspect, adorned with Messrs. Gillow's furniture, and supposed to be the lodging of young *Darlington*, seemed to be far too palatial and magnificent for the occasion.

Plays of the class of "Youth" do not call into requisition the best powers of the performers. A strong company has been assembled at Drury Lane, however; and no doubt the players did all they could for the play. Miss Litton in tasteful dresses personates the meretricious *Eve de Malvoisie*, the character affording the actress very few opportunities. Mr. Vernon is forcible as the wicked *Major Reckley*; Mr. Arthur Matthison plays efficiently as *Colonel Dalton*; and the convict *Gardham* finds a humorous representative in Mr. Harry Nicholls, who comes I think from the Grecian Theatre. But the character most in favour with the audience seemed to be *Willie Spratley*, a young ensign, whose connection with the fable is of the slightest. Miss Caroline Hill plays *Willie Spratley* with admirable gaiety, good taste, and spirit.

CLV.

"THE LIGHTS O' LONDON."

[Princess's Theatre. —September 1881.]

MR. SIMS's "Lights o' London" is a five-act melodrama of the good old Adelphi pattern. The story deals exclusively with English life, abounds in stir and incident, blends the tragic and the comic in nice proportions, and submits to the audience many familiar sights and scenes. Albert Smith's playwright, Mr. Glenalvon Fogg, it may be

remembered, held that the secret of success in dramatic composition consisted "in showing people what they know something about." On the stage, indeed, it is the known rather than the unknown that it is accepted as the marvellous or the admirable; our audiences love old acquaintances. Acknowledging this opinion, Mr. Sims has brought into his play excellent pictures of the Borough Market on Saturday night, of the exterior of a casual ward, of the interior of a police-station, of the "slips" in Regent's Park, with the Regent's Canal and its bridges; and these exhibitions assuredly obtained cordial recognition and applause. It must not be understood, however, that "The Lights o' London" is a mere panoramic play, dependent for its success upon two or three strong mechanical effects, or that the author is but a subaltern to such captains as the stage-carpenter or the scene-painter. Mr. Sims does not simply address himself to the eyes of his public; he compels them to listen, he interests them deeply, he is now humorous and now pathetic, he persuades them to laugh and to weep alternately. It may be objected that there is nothing absolutely novel about Mr. Sims's fable, and that many of his characters and his situations are rather of the conventional type. But, without doubt, the dramatist has made good use of his materials, however trite these in truth may be; has brought to bear upon his subject a force and freshness of thought and treatment peculiar to himself. The first act, which is what Mr. Boucicault would call of a "proloquial" character, seemed to me of somewhat over-artificial construction and to move stiffly; the personages of the plot appeared to suffer from the strain of dramatic exigency, to conduct themselves less according to the laws of reason and probability than in obedience to the arbitrary dictates of the author. But in the second act the comic characters arrived upon the scene, the story developed new sources of interest and excitement, and an impressive interview between an itinerant showman and an escaped convict—a very ingenious commingling of genuine pathos and broad comicality—fairly launched the play upon its very prosperous voyage. After this all was plain sailing; and the audience missed no opportunity of expressing their hearty

approval of the "Lights o' London," its author, and interpreters.

Of course one knows beforehand that for our melodramas a comfortable conclusion is always in store, and that those who wait long enough may depend upon seeing poetical or theatrical justice fully vindicated: virtue will surely triumph, while vice will be duly abased and punished. The time comes at last when the tables are turned, the suffering poor change places with the guilty rich, the mighty are put down from their seat and the humble and meek are exalted; while as matters of detail the stolen jewels revert to their lawful proprietor, the lost will comes to light, the forger is hurried away detected and punished, for the innocent convict a royal pardon is forthcoming, and the true heir obtains possession of the valuable estates he has been so long and unrighteously deprived of. But if these happy issues are invariable results, the means by which the author designs to attain them are less apparent, and the spectators are interested in the struggles of the *dramatis personæ* to emerge from their labyrinthine difficulties and reach the rewards and the joys of the catastrophe. Mr. Sims is, I think, particularly happy in what I may call masking the batteries of his invention: he supplies his story every now and then with a new impetus, and so contrives that the incidents of the drama, however expected they may be, shall yet occur with the suddenness which ensures popular admiration and applause. Of course the work is of no great pretence, is indeed a direct bid for the favour of a miscellaneous audience, and does not disdain upon occasion recourse to time-honoured clap-traps and the indulgence of various British prejudices. At the same time Mr. Sims is a skilled author, who imparts an appreciable literary flavour to his productions, who writes dexterously and wittily, with abundant humour at command, and an intimate knowledge of many phases of London life, and whose sentiments and sympathies are as honestly felt as they are forcibly expressed. "The Lights o' London" pleased the audience beyond measure; was received with an extraordinary show of favour. Nor need much abatement be made because of the custom which assigns raptures always to first performances. The success was unquestionably as

genuine as it was deserved. The play strikes me, indeed, as the best example of its class I have seen for many days or nights. Nor can I think that its prosperity will need much assistance from the industry of bill-stickers or advertising agents, the certificates or testimonials of clergymen, critics, and others. For nowadays certain plays resemble quack medicines: sufferers are persuaded to give evidence that they have greatly benefited by their exhibition.

The performance was altogether most satisfactory. Mr. Wilson Barrett proved himself very vigorous as the hero; Miss Eastlake as the heroine was energetic to excess. Mr. George Barrett, who is new to London, I think, as the showman *Jarvis* displayed strong natural humour, obtaining good support from the efforts of Mrs. Stephens and Miss Eugenie Edwards, who personated the itinerant manager's wife and son. Certain of the minor characters were particularly well sustained; I may instance the *Philosopher Jack* of Mr. Coote, a very life-like portrayal. The London street scenes were conducted with special spirit. On every side was evidence of ingenuity, painstaking, and managerial liberality.

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